



# The NFL Grassroots Program



**LISC's NFL Grassroots Program**, established in 1998, is a partnership of the National Football League's Youth Football Fund and LISC. It provides neighborhood-based organizations and schools with grants and technical assistance to build new football fields or refurbish old ones. The program, funded by NFL teams and the NFL Players Association, not only creates recreational opportunities for young people, it also acts as a catalyst for community development. Since its inception, the program has distributed \$20 million in grants to help build more than 150 playing fields in 50 metropolitan areas where NFL teams play. Improving **access to quality recreational facilities** is a central component of LISC's Sustainable Communities strategic plan.

## The Importance of Playing Fields

More and more research shows that the **availability of recreational facilities** can be a critical factor in determining whether children can take part in regular physical activity and social interaction and, by extension, whether communities grow stronger or struggle. Since at least the 1970s, experts in planning, psychology, sociology, and childhood development have been drawing an increasingly firm, bright line linking the quality of local recreational areas with the well-being of neighborhoods and their children.



## LISC's Role

**Finding the most promising sites and sponsors**, helping to assemble effective partnerships and funding sources, and equipping community organizations to shoulder the long-term responsibility for field management are among the many critical services that LISC provides in the Grassroots Program. The NFL and its teams, besides their extraordinary financial support, have played a catalytic role in drawing other essential public and private partners into the effort. Without these two national sources of capital, expertise, and training, few if any of the participating communities would have had much of a chance at building, maintaining, and improving their fields on their own.

## How It Works

The story of the Grassroots Program is not just a catalogue of attractive facilities, new equipment, and durable playing surfaces, stands, and scoreboards. It is even more a story about **steady technical and financial assistance, astute planning, persistent community leadership**, and careful, sustained stewardship of a still-rare common asset. These are the elements the Grassroots Program helps to reinforce in each participating community, in varying ways and with different combinations of resources in every place.

## Who's Involved

The following teams have **helped restore fields** in the communities where they play: Arizona Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons, Baltimore Ravens, Buffalo Bills, Carolina Panthers, Cincinnati Bengals, Chicago Bears, Cleveland Browns, Dallas Cowboys, Denver Broncos, Detroit Lions, Green Bay Packers, Houston Texans, Indianapolis Colts, Jacksonville Jaguars, Kansas City Chiefs, Miami Dolphins, Minnesota Vikings, New England Patriots, New Orleans Saints, New York Giants, New York Jets, Oakland Raiders, Philadelphia Eagles, Pittsburgh Steelers, San Diego Chargers, San Francisco 49ers, Seattle Seahawks, St. Louis Rams, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tennessee Titans, and Washington Redskins. The NFL also supports youth recreation in Los Angeles.

For more information, please contact *Beverly Smith, LISC Director of Youth Development & Recreation*, at 212-455-9881, or [bsmith@lisc.org](mailto:bsmith@lisc.org).

**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**