



GRASSROOTS
Field Grant Program in partnership with LISC

LISC
Sports & Recreation

THE NFL FOUNDATION GRASSROOTS PROGRAM *A Community Football Fields Program*

The NFL Foundation Grassroots Program is a partnership of the National Football League Foundation (NFL Foundation) and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to provide non-profit, neighborhood-based organizations, middle schools and high schools with financing and technical assistance to improve the quality, safety, and accessibility of local football fields.

Parks and ball fields can serve as tremendous community assets because they offer opportunities for recreation, education, and relaxation that contribute to the local quality of life, especially for young people. Since 1998, the NFL Foundation Grassroots Program has awarded more than \$40 million in grants for more than 300 projects in more than 70 cities across the country.

How the Fields Program Works

The NFL and LISC issue a Request for Proposals (RFP), or an open invitation to all qualified non-profit organizations in NFL markets to submit proposals for funding. LISC reviews the proposals, requests additional information where necessary, and makes site visits to the finalist organizations. Then LISC recommends to the NFL which organizations have the capacity, plans, and partners to renovate their local football fields and to attract increased youth football programming to the site. The Board of Directors of the NFL Foundation makes the final funding decisions.

Once the NFL chooses the award recipients, LISC works with local NFL teams and the award recipients to make press announcements and handle media events. LISC then manages the flow of funding, making sure that projects move forward on a timely schedule. The proposal and review processes are designed to make sure that the capital improvements to renovate older fields and establish new football fields will have a stream of maintenance funds and the community support needed to sustain the use of the fields over the long term.

NFL Funds Leverage Other Investments

LISC works to ensure that field projects receiving NFL funding have matching dollars to meet their total development budgets and that sources of field maintenance funds are located. Local matching funds are valuable because they create investment partnerships that strengthen the project. Moreover, many of the field projects are located in close proximity to other community revitalization efforts, creating a web of local investments that reinforce each other.

The NFL Foundation Grassroots Program also welcomes the involvement of individual NFL teams and players. LISC works to accommodate additional donations, promotions, and events from teams and players in agreement with the program guidelines.

LISC as an NFL Partner

LISC is the nation's largest support organization for nonprofit community development. Since 1980, LISC has invested more than \$16.2 billion in non-profit neighborhood-based organizations that have leveraged those funds for a total of nearly \$48.5 billion in development. These local partners have used those funds to build or rehabilitate 348,000 affordable homes and apartments and create 56 million square feet of commercial and industrial space, including community facilities such as child and health care centers and parks and open spaces.

LISC operates through a network of local offices, based in most of the country's largest metropolitan areas and a national rural program that works with approximately 58 rural-based community development organizations in 32 states. Local offices allow LISC to have a hands-on approach to these development projects and to monitor these investments over the long term. LISC staff members have experience not only in real estate, but also in how to build the organizational capacity of neighborhood non-profit organizations so that they are able to manage and lead local revitalization efforts.

USA Football as an NFL Partner

In an effort to incorporate and improve health and safety on community football fields, the NFL Foundation Grassroots Program collaborates with USA Football, the sport's national governing body in the United States. USA Football offers the sport's only nationally accredited coach certification program and membership benefits for coaches, players, game officials and youth football parents and hosts more than 80 football training events annually. With members residing in 50 states and Washington D.C. USA Football serves as the official youth football development partner of the NFL and its 32 teams.

When an NFL Foundation Grassroots grant is awarded, the grant recipient facility must recommend that all youth organizations utilizing that field require all youth football coaches to be certified to coach using USA Football's Level 1 Coach Certification course. Additionally, youth football organizations scheduled to utilize that field should become a USA Football League Affiliation member. The cost of the USA Football League Affiliation will be subsidized by USA Football.

Why Work with Neighborhood Non-Profit Organizations?

Many neighborhood-based non-profit organizations know how to manage capital improvements to parks and to broker programming (e.g. youth football leagues, science fairs, summer festivals, and community celebrations) into park fields and play spaces. Equally important, neighborhood-based organizations engage residents as stakeholders. If local residents have a sense of ownership and see themselves as central to the creation and maintenance of play fields, those

developments are much more likely to be protected and preserved for long-term use. The NFL Foundation Grassroots Program is intended not only to respond to the immediate shortage of play fields, but also to build the infrastructure, through partnerships and resident involvement, to help sustain open spaces for community use.