Guidance on and Examples of Community Benefits

Conservation, community-based, and governmental organizations are increasingly evolving their work to ensure better outcomes for people and nature. A transformation is underway that calls for a change in the questions we ask, the relationships we build, and the actions we take.

The Nature Conservancy defines community benefits as the positive impacts felt by local communities and people as the result of conservation and climate adaptation projects. We encourage applicants to incorporate meaningful community benefits into their proposed project's goals.

Below are examples of projects that successfully included community benefits into their project design and outcomes.

- "This project will stand out for how we center the community's role in maintaining and enhancing the ecological resilience and functions of this land while addressing people's fundamental needs, including through land-based livelihood practices such as agroecology. With support from the broader community, this land has been prioritized by the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Steering Committee of [organization name]. We believe equitable land access can address both the environmental and social crises of our time by building broader interest and engagement with nature through land-based practices that nourish our community."

- "After securing 307 acres of farmland and open space for conservation, the Town launched [name of initiative], a municipal-led effort intended to advance climate resiliency and adaptation through the lenses of agriculture, the environment and community development. The purpose of the project is to ensure the active inclusion and involvement of underrepresented and historically excluded stakeholders, strengthening the planning process, and leading to increased climate resiliency and adaptation outcomes...".

- “Our organization is creating a community resource in its preserves through a multi-organizational partnership that includes Big Brothers and Big Sisters, [name of local organization] and the Community Action Youth Council. They are also partnering with a local high school to provide forest education, including career training opportunities.”

- “The preserve is part of a network of forested lands and reservoirs that provide clean drinking water to over 5 million people including Newark, the largest city in New Jersey. A summer camp for Newark children operates here to provide them experiences in nature through hiking, fishing, boating, and camping.”

- “We are working with partners to create a new Community Forest in an area that is underemployed, lower income and has an above average poverty rate. The Community Forest will connect with a long-distance rail trail creating recreational and economic opportunities as well as providing a natural learning space for the adjacent elementary school’s outdoor education program.”

- “The expansion of the Town Forest will both protect an important historic resource and also provide for increased educational opportunities and camps that serve low-income communities and communities of color.”