



LISC



2009 NFL GRASSROOTS PROGRAM

A Community Football Fields Program

The NFL Youth Football Fund Grassroots Program is a partnership of the National Football League Youth Football Fund (NFL YFF) 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. In eight years of programming, the Fields Program has awarded \$25 million in grants for 200 projects with total development costs of \$90 million in over 50 cities across the country. Grants are announced and awarded annually in the early winter.

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 Youth Football Fund 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 match 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 Grassroots Program is also welcome to the involvement of individual NFL teams and players. LISC will work to accommodate additional donations, promotions, and events from teams and players as long as they meet the program guidelines.

LISC as an NFL Partner

LISC is the nation's largest support organization of nonprofit community development. Since 1979, LISC has invested more than \$8 billion for non-profit neighborhood-based organizations that have leveraged those funds for a total of nearly \$28 billion in development. These local partners have used those funds to build or rehabilitate over 245,000 units of affordable housing and create 36 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 30 local offices, based in most of the country's largest metropolitan areas and a national rural program that works with approximately 70 rural-based community development organizations in 37 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.

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 (i.e. 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 Grassroots Program is intended not only to respond to the immediate shortage of play fields, but also to build an infrastructure, through partnerships and resident involvement, to help sustain open spaces for community use.