

### 3 USDN Member Grant Funds Topped \$1.9 Million in 2014

#### USDN is aligning and leveraging grant funds that support member projects: Innovation Fund, Partners for Places, and Peer Exchange.

What began with a \$100,000 collaboration fund in 2010 has evolved into three funds, supported by national and local funders:

- The [Partners for Places Fund](#), a collaboration between USDN and the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, supports collaborations between municipalities and a local funder to build stronger relationships across sectors and support adoption of innovations in urban sustainability.
- The [USDN Peer Learning Exchange Fund](#) supports learning exchanges between two or more member communities to accelerate the spread of proven practices.
- The [USDN Innovation Fund](#) supports collaborations of four or more member communities to develop innovations that address city-identified problems or opportunities in sustainability or scale-up proven innovations.

In 2014, the funds granted a total of \$1,973,456 in support of 43 projects:

Fund Name	2014 Amount Granted	Projects Supported
Partners for Places	\$1,093,250	19
Peer Learning Exchange	\$32,476	7
Innovation Fund	\$847,730	17

Between 2010 and 2014, these three funds have re-granted over \$6.6 million for dozens of network-driven innovation development, scaling, and adoption projects. Essentially these are high-leverage small-grant funds, with project size averaging less than \$50,000. The experience of these funds has demonstrated that cities and counties:

- Provide an ambitious menu of urban-sustainability innovation activities prioritized by what local governments think is most important and within their control - and informed by practical, on-the-ground realities for implementation.
- Successfully mobilize and collaborate to innovate, managing projects and engaging effectively with local funders as well as leading organizations in the many communities of practice that have emerged in urban sustainability.
- Align into a “collective voice” to influence the direction and accelerate the pace of urban-sustainability innovation undertaken by NGOs and other levels of government.

These successes position local government to take innovation development to a new level of strategic and systemic impact—but such an evolution requires a greater degree of coordination among funds and additional funding pools to fill gaps and exploit opportunities.

USDN strives for a greater degree of coordination, which would allow increased synergy among the funds—making it easier, for instance, to support multi-stage projects that unfold over several years. Lessons from one fund’s projects inform another fund’s activities and move to align the “voice of cities” to more powerfully influence communities of practice.