

National Urban Sustainability Directors Gathering

Grant Type: **Dollar and nondollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$60,000**

Foundation Name: **Blackstone Ranch Institute**

What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

The objectives of the grant were to bring sustainability directors and partner organizations from cities (15) together to build a national network or professional association to further the environmental sustainability effort in urban growth and planning work; and to move from a small gathering to a national effort with timely relevance and meaningful impact.

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

The meeting led directly to the formation of both Green Cities California (which leads California cities in sustainability work) and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (now 150 cities in North America and a global network of leading cities that are working on carbon neutrality). The meeting led indirectly to several other organizational efforts that have resulted in the development of urban sustainability as a field of practice.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

The grant—and collaborative gathering it supported—led to the emergence of several national efforts that affect more than 50 million lives and have been key to the development of the national (and global) urban sustainability movement. That movement has evolved from the fringes of city planning to a more central position in city government organization and planning, and is influencing global understanding of environmental sustainability.

The Blackstone Ranch Institute tested and proved its hunch that early stage grants of modest proportion—often the first grant—can be directed at collaborative gatherings that form new networks, campaigns, or organizations that catalyze action at national and global levels. The social profit—whether measured in millions of people affected or millions of dollars in subsequent funding or investment—far exceeds the magnitude of the original philanthropic investment.

The institute was able to use that experience—its first grant in 2006—as a model for how to leverage modest grants into major impact in a variety of environmental fields. Since then, the institute has offered more than 70 grants, the majority of which have been first grants to important new networks, campaigns, and organizations that are playing a foundational role in sustainability efforts and the transition to a more ecologically responsible world.



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