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Whole Foods improving fresh food access

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Whole Cities Foundation, a nonprofit created by Whole Foods Market that works alongside community-based organizations to improve neighborhood health by broadening access to fresh food and nutrition education, announced that Newark, NJ, organizations can apply now for \$150,000 in



grants through Feb. 20.

The grant funding launches an additional three-year commitment by Whole Cities Foundation with the

Newark community to continue building a thriving local food system. The new three-year investment equates to more than \$1 million that the foundation has provided to the city's community-based health and food initiatives since 2017.

Newark-led organizations with projects that improve fresh food access are encouraged to apply for up to \$15,000 with the Fresh, Healthy Food Access Grant. Ten grants will be awarded for a total of \$150,000. Applications must be received by Feb. 20 and submitted online at wholecitiesfoundation.org.

Since beginning work in Newark, Whole Cities Foundation has partnered with 24 organizations across all five wards investing \$485,000 with the Newark community; \$450,000 was awarded previously through Fresh, Healthy Food Access Grants with the remainder invested to support opportunities shaped by the goals and requests of its Newark grant partners.

“Since day one, Whole Cities Foundation’s support in Newark has been shaped by input from local farmers, gardeners, elected officials and other community leaders entrenched in grassroots efforts in their community,” said Dianna Purcell, senior grant program manager at Whole Cities Foundation. “By partnering with these experts, we have gained insight on how to amplify their efforts and best support the growth of the local food system.”

With the help of its founder and benefactor Whole Foods Market, Whole Cities Foundation launched the Fresh, Healthy Food Access Grant program in 2017. Grant partners have included community gardens, urban farms, healthy cooking classes, farmers’ markets, agriculture-skills development programs, and other initiatives championing innovative ways to create long-term healthy food access solutions.

Prior to Whole Cities Foundation’s support in Newark, the approach to some community-led initiatives left some communities feeling alienated and voiceless, according to Tobias Fox, founder and managing director of the community-driven nonprofit, Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.

“Whole Cities Foundation was able to support overlooked initiatives that demonstrated innovation and that were also carried by residents,” said Fox. “This led to an increase of healthy food access projects throughout the city, which gave birth to the Newark Community Food System that focuses on actionable steps to empower residents to become actively involved in reshaping their food system, while gaining control of their health and environment.”

Fox noted that by having the foundation as a community partner, NCFS has been able to collectively coordinate yearly events, such as the Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference, the Citywide Garden Tour and the Community Meal. He said Whole Cities Foundation support has also increased farmers’ markets and pop-up farm stands and has become a support system for more than 20 gardeners and urban farmers.

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