

Bed-Stuy Farming Nonprofit Green City Force Wins \$500K Grant

Green City Force received a second "Community Progress Makers" grant from the Citi Foundation.

By [Noah Manskar](#), Patch Staff | Apr 27, 2018 2:52 pm ET | Updated Apr 27, 2018 5:32 pm ET



BEDFORD-STUYVESANT, BROOKLYN — A Bed-Stuy-based nonprofit that builds urban farms in New York City public housing complexes won a second \$500,000 grant to support its work. Green City Force is one of 12 organizations in the city and 40 nationwide selected to second round of the Citi Foundation's "Community Progress Makers" grants on Thursday.

The grants, totaling \$20 million, fund operations and provide technical support for nonprofits that take on economic challenges in big U.S. cities. The first round built more than 10,000 units of affordable housing and connected 1,800 people with jobs, the foundation said.

"We're pleased with the results from our inaugural Community Progress Makers and are looking forward to implementing the lessons we've learned with this next, impressive group of community leaders as they scale, innovate and drive impact," Citi Foundation President Brandee McHale said in a statement.

Green City Force was also chosen for the inaugural round of Community Progress Makers grants in 2016. The organization runs AmeriCorps service programs including the Urban Farm Corps, which hires New York City Housing Authority residents to build farms that produce fresh, healthy food for public housing tenants.

The two-year grant gives Green City Force a lot of flexibility in how to spend it, allowing the organization to "pilot innovative new programs, try things out and really build on our model in a way that other grants might not allow us to do," said Bahij Chancey, GCF's development and communications manager.

That flexibility aims to help nonprofits find innovative ways to solve longstanding problems, McHale said, which Green City Force has a track record of doing.

"Green City Force is particularly unique in terms of what they're doing by addressing both sustainability issues, climate issues, as well as youth development and youth employment challenges," McHale said in an interview last month.

The first Citi Foundation grant helped Green City Force implement its social enterprise program, which hires graduates of its AmeriCorps programs to work on projects that help low-income New Yorkers make their homes more energy-efficient.

The program allowed Green City Force to get contracts through NYCHA and the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority that now account for a "significant" portion of GCF's budget, Chancey said.

WHEDco, a Bronx-based community development nonprofit, also won a Community Progress Makers grant this week. The money will help expand its support for South Bronx small businesses and low-income residents.

"This core operating support from the Citi Foundation is exceptional because it provides us the flexibility to really deepen our work; it demonstrates trust in our leadership and our knowledge of the people we serve," WHEDco President Davon Russell said in a statement.

Another organization, The HOPE Program, plans to put its grant toward implementing a five-year strategic plan that will boost is job training programs.

Other winning New York City nonprofits include Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Hot Bread Kitchen, LISC NYC, Low-Income Investment Fund, Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners, Start Small Think Big, and The POINT Community Development Corporation.

(Lead image: Green City Force, which builds farms at NYCHA complexes, won a second \$500,000 grant from the Citi Foundation. Photo courtesy of Green City Force)

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