

A nighttime photograph of a city street, likely in New York City, featuring tall buildings and light trails from traffic. The image is used as a background for the report cover.

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR NEW YORK CITY

2025 IMPACT REPORT

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

2025 was a year that asked a lot of New Yorkers. We faced growing pressure on the institutions many communities rely on. And still, across all five boroughs, local leaders kept solving problems, building trust, and strengthening the blocks they call home.

I want to take a moment to reflect on what we accomplished this year, and to look ahead to the work we're building right now.

At CitizensNYC, we had the privilege of supporting the work of everyday New Yorkers. This year, we awarded more than \$1.2 million in microgrants to community leaders and local partners across 100+ neighborhoods, from gardeners turning underused lots into shared community spaces, to youth-led initiatives creating stronger connections and safer environments, to small business owners investing in their neighborhoods. In each project, we saw the same thing: practical solutions led by people with deep knowledge of their own communities.

We celebrated this work at our 50th Anniversary Gala and our All In for NYC Fall Cocktail Reception. In a year that brought real uncertainty for many institutions, our supporters came together with focus and generosity. Those evenings were important fundraising milestones, but they were also a reminder that New Yorkers continue to invest in the civic life of this city, and in the organizations that make it possible.

In 2025, we added our voice to the public conversation in a clear way. When the narrative about New York leaned toward decline, we offered a different perspective grounded in the optimism we see every day. Our Daily News op-ed, [New York Isn't Broken](#), reflected what our grantees demonstrate consistently: progress is happening, sometimes quietly, through local leadership.

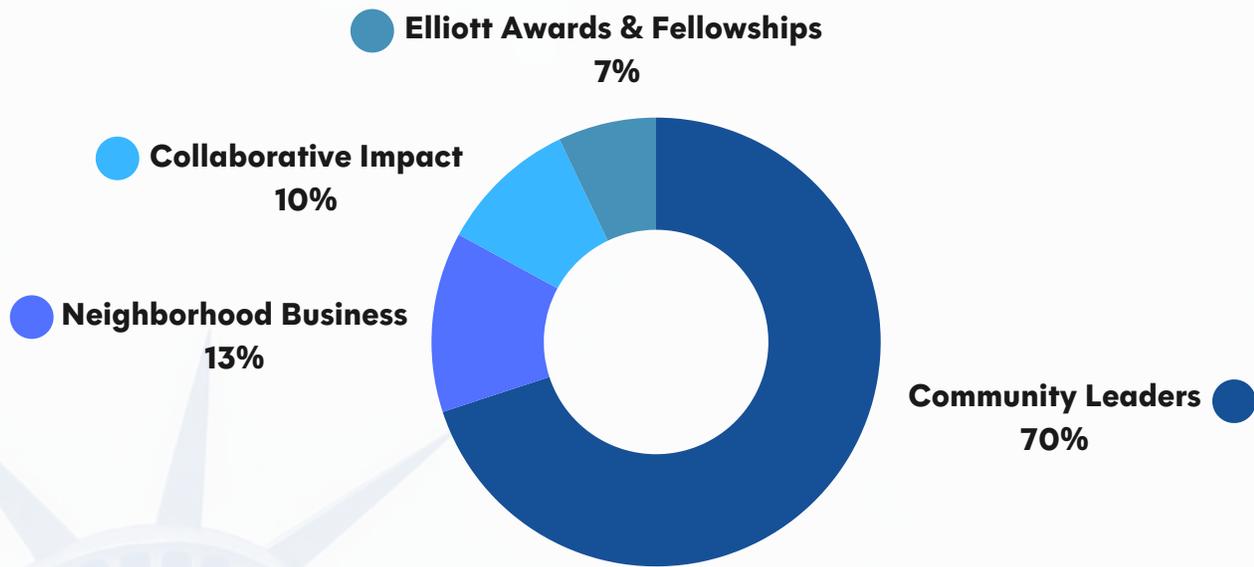
As we move into 2026, we're bringing that same clarity to our priorities.

We will expand and strengthen our microgrant programs, because flexible funding in the hands of trusted local leaders remains one of the most effective ways to drive community impact. And we will continue to refine our work around civic infrastructure - how trust is built, how leadership develops, and how organizations grow - so that philanthropy and public partners can support what works at the neighborhood level and expand their impact.

Fifty years in, CitizensNYC remains guided by a core belief: New York runs on people and on consistent, often unrecognized acts of commitment that add up to a stronger city. Thank you for being part of this work, and for backing the leaders and neighbors who keep New York moving forward.



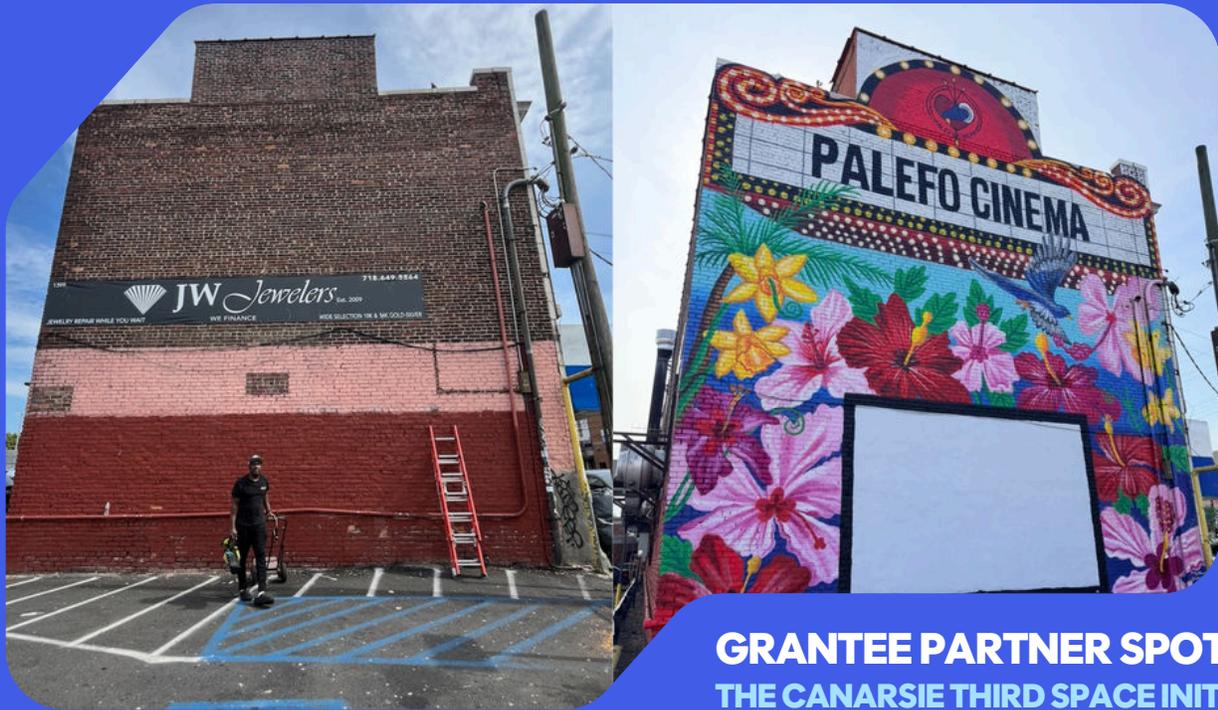
OUR 2025 GRANTMAKING



Total: \$1,211,500

- **COMMUNITY LEADERS GRANTS - \$850,500**
- **NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS GRANTS - \$156,000**
- **COLLABORATIVE IMPACT GRANTS - \$120,000**
- **ELLIOTT AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS - \$85,000**

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- **Community Leader and Neighborhood Business Grants:** Building the foundation for grassroots change, these grants provide up to \$5,000 to local leaders with deep ties to their neighborhoods. These grantee partners use the funding to implement impactful projects addressing community needs while gaining entry into CitizensNYC's network of support and resources.
 - **Collaborative Impact Grants:** For leaders ready to expand their reach, this portfolio provided \$120,000 spread across five grants - one in each borough - to collaborative projects involving multiple grantee partners. By encouraging cross-sector partnerships, such as addressing food insecurity through combined efforts of small businesses, grassroots groups, and nonprofits, this grant helps tackle complex issues holistically and promotes sustainable, collective solutions.
 - **Elliott Awards & Fellowships:** Honoring the legacy of our co-founder Osborn Elliott, one-year Elliott Fellowships of \$15,000 support partners who have grown beyond our eligibility threshold to provide their expertise to our grantee network. Elliott Awards of up to \$5,000 recognize grantee partners who are poised for growth.



GRANTEE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT THE CANARSIE THIRD SPACE INITIATIVE

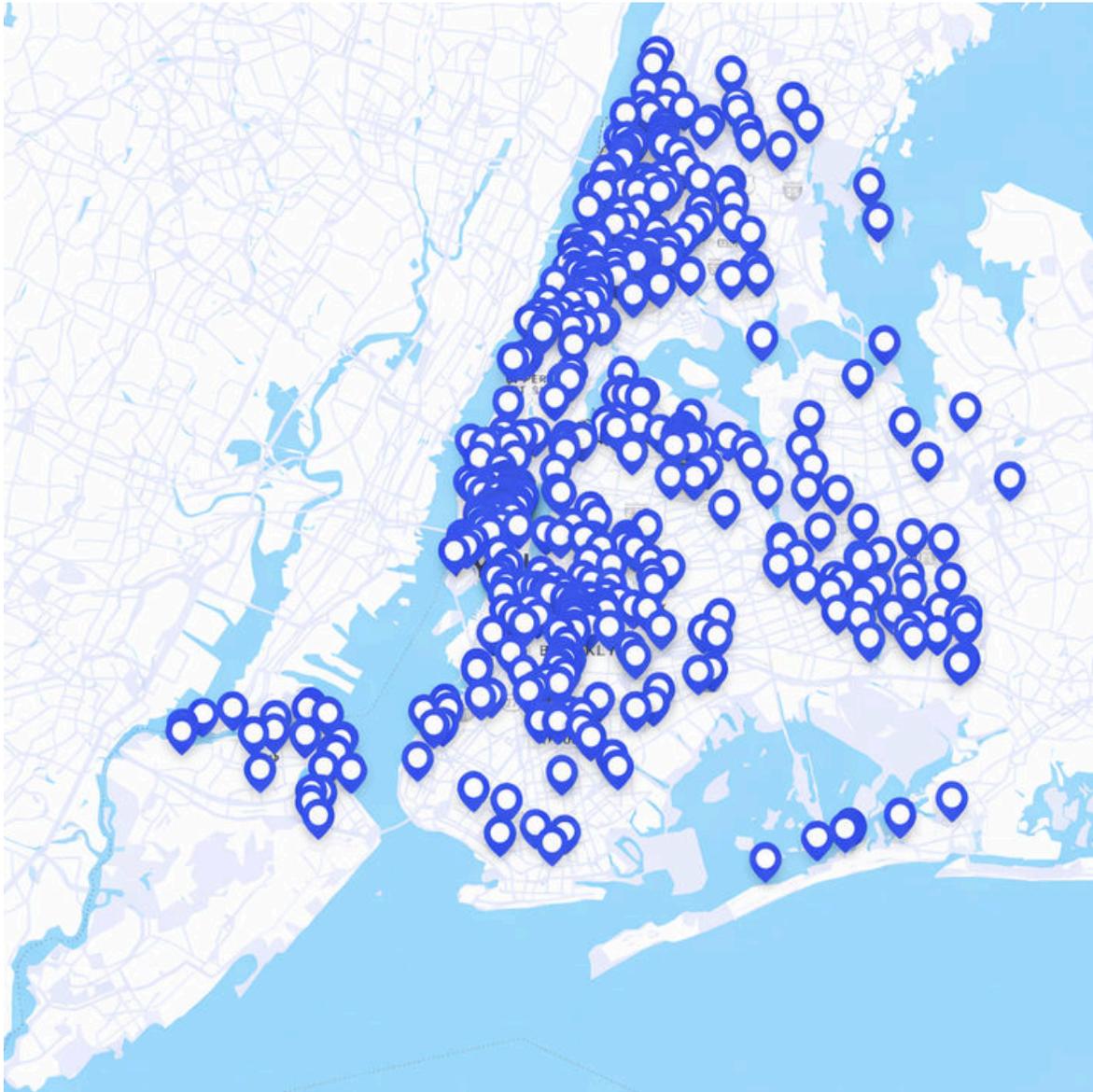
In Canarsie, the movie theater isn't just about entertainment. It's about dignity. It's about having a place in your own neighborhood where people can gather, laugh, talk back to the screen, and feel like the city is investing in them, too. That's why CitizensNYC is proud to support the Canarsie Third Space Initiative through our Collaborative Impact Grants, which are built for partnerships: local groups working together to bring a shared vision to life, block by block.

At the center of this collaboration is PaleFO Cinema, led by Eileen Baptistin Level, who turned the side of the historic Jerry Building on Rockaway Parkway into an outdoor cinema. Level has described Canarsie as a "cinema desert," shaped by decades of disinvestment and the loss of local theaters. She's building a new kind of cultural home in response.

The plan was both simple and powerful: a floral-themed mural that includes a large projection space, so the wall itself becomes a movie screen. In October of last year, the theater opened with a ribbon cutting and an inaugural showing. Hundreds of people came out to celebrate the opening of a new third space and enjoy the movies together.

The strength of this work is the partnership behind it. The Flossy Organization brings the civic muscle, supporting residents with organizing, advocacy, and the skills to shape what comes next so this isn't a one-off project, but a foundation for community power. The Canarsie Merchants Association brings deep corridor leadership, helping ensure the streets around Rockaway Parkway are active, cared for, and welcoming. A thriving public space is also a thriving small business community. And Bink International Charity Inc. brings a commitment to young people and families, with support that helps students build academically and socially, so the next generation isn't just invited to attend events. They're supported to lead in their own neighborhood. Together, they're making something bigger than a screen: a place where Canarsie can gather, be seen, and speak loudly.

CITYWIDE IMPACT



Each year, CitizensNYC funds hundreds of projects across more than 100 neighborhoods in all 5 boroughs.

Click the map above to explore each of these partners on a live map and find one in your neighborhood!



GRANTEE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT ASHE BIRTHING SERVICES

They say *it takes a village* to raise a child. Friendly neighbors, wise teachers, generous family members, and thoughtful friends. A community of people banded together to ensure the health, wealth, and happiness of a budding family.

You may find yourself wondering, *where is this village?*

CitizensNYC will tell you that you may find it in Ashe Birthing Services, where community building begins even before birth. Founded in 2016 by two sisters, Emilie and Griselda Rodriguez, Ashe Birthing Services strives to improve maternal health outcomes for Black and Brown families in NYC, offering doula services during both the antenatal and postpartum periods. Ashe doulas are trained in various modalities related to childbirth and postpartum care, striking a balance between evidence-based research and ancestral practices. Alongside herbal remedies, lactation tactics, and nourishing postpartum meals, they offer unlimited assistance and support throughout the birthing process and beyond; a truly holistic level of care for our new mothers.

In 2023, the CDC reported that the maternal mortality rate for Black women was roughly 4 times that of their Hispanic, White, and Asian counterparts. CitizensNYC stands firmly behind organizations like Ashe Birthing Services in their efforts to combat these figures and heal the unmet maternal healthcare needs of underserved communities. And we are not the only ones. In 2024, Emilie Rodriguez was recognized with the National Minority Quality Forum's 40 Under 40 Award for her decade of transformative leadership in maternal health. A true testament to the impact of long-term support, accessibility, and a new standard of care.

Whether in direct support throughout pregnancy and childbirth, or extended care through the postpartum healing process, Ashe Birthing Services shows up fully and wholeheartedly for new mothers and families. They help families of color connect with care providers and services that understand their language and culture. Providers they can believe in and trust.

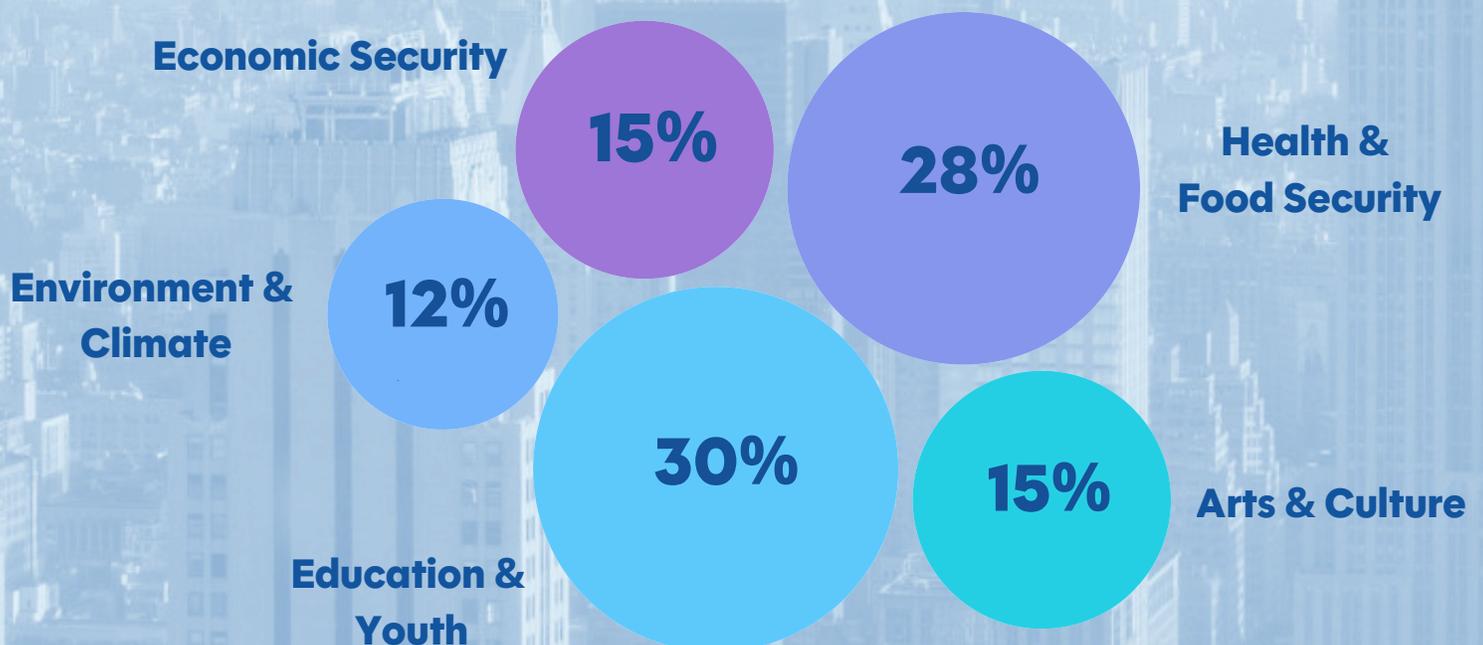
It really does take a village. We're proud to be part of it.

OUR 2025 PROJECTS

BY THE NUMBERS

HYPERLOCAL INITIATIVES FUNDED: 334
NEW YORKERS SERVED: 250,000+

PROJECT AREAS OF IMPACT:



CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT CON EDISON & BEE UNIVERSITY

In 2025, CitizensNYC and Con Edison are deepening our partnership to fuel neighborhood-based climate resilience across New York City. Through Con Edison's support, we are funding grassroots environmental leaders who are turning vacant lots, rooftops, and community spaces into sites of learning, stewardship, and climate action, including Bee University NYC (Bee-U) in Staten Island.

Bee-U, founded in 2021 by Executive Director André Ware, is built on a simple but powerful belief: environmental stewardship should be accessible, hands-on, and rooted in the experiences of those most impacted by environmental hazards. A former participant in experiential education programs himself, André created Bee-U to give young people - especially youth of color, LGBTQIA+ youth, and youth from under-resourced communities - transformational opportunities to lead.

Through its flagship Urban Beekeeping Fellowship, Bee-U introduces youth ages 16–24 to urban beekeeping, leadership development, environmental justice, and green career exploration. Fellows receive stipends, transportation support, and access to optional paid sessions. In 2025 alone, 30 Fellows completed the program, including 75% who identified as people of color and 77% who were enrolled in school, turning beekeeping into a vehicle for skill-building, confidence, and community leadership.

Bee-U's hives are more than teaching tools; they are micro-habitats that support local ecosystems, pollinate urban gardens, and spark conversations about climate, food access, and environmental justice. As New York faces hotter summers, flooding, and uneven access to green space, Bee-U is helping neighborhoods build resilience from the ground up.

Supported by CitizensNYC and Con Edison, Bee-U has graduated nearly 70 Fellows, expanded to Brooklyn and Governors Island, and built deep trust with youth and families across the city. Together, we are investing in a greener, more just, and community-powered New York. One hive, and one young leader, at a time.



CITIZENSNYC IN THE PRESS

In 2025, CitizensNYC contributed to the public conversation through op-eds in the Daily News and City Limits, using our platform to affirm what our work makes clear every day: New York’s strength comes from the people who show up for their neighborhoods. At a time when public narratives often centered crisis and decline, these pieces highlighted a different story: one of community-led change, grassroots leadership, and the local problem-solvers building a more just, connected, and resilient city.

DAILY NEWS

In her New York Daily News op-ed, Julie Shapiro pushed back on the idea that New York is in decline, arguing that some of the city’s strongest solutions are already taking shape at the neighborhood level. Drawing on examples from CitizensNYC grantee partners, from community gardens in the Bronx to environmental justice organizing in Southeast Queens and public space activation in Canarsie, the piece made the case that local leaders are not waiting for permission to improve their blocks. Instead, they are building practical, community-led solutions that show what a stronger city can look like from the ground up.

“The city isn’t broken. But the solutions won’t just come from City Hall. They’ll come from your block.”

CITY LIMITS

In City Limits, Julie Shapiro focused on the power of early investment in grassroots leadership. The op-ed argued that small-dollar microgrants can be the first step toward lasting neighborhood impact, helping local leaders turn lived experience, vision, and trust into long-term community institutions. By highlighting examples like Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project and Think!Chinatown, the piece showed how modest funding and sustained support can help grassroots efforts grow into trusted anchors of civic life.

“There’s a phrase we hear often from grantee partners: ‘You were there at the beginning.’ At CitizensNYC, we take that role seriously. We just want to see our partners win. And they do.”

2025 ELLIOTT FELLOWS

Funded by a bequest from the Elliott family and named for our co-founder Oz Elliott, this five-year initiative honors former CitizensNYC grantees who have grown into enduring anchors for their communities. The Fellowship brings them back as mentors, sharing hard-won knowledge, building capacity, and guiding the next generation of grassroots changemakers.

This summer we were proud to announce the inaugural cohort of Elliott Fellows: Laci Chisholm, Allyson Martinez, and Meghan McNamara, three leaders whose work embodies the spirit of community-led change.



Laci Chisholm

Laci Chisholm is the founder of Fit4Dance. This Central Brooklyn wellness studio centers Black women and communities of color through dance, fitness, and cultural programming that celebrates joy and healing. Fit4Dance has become a trusted gathering space, a place where neighbors connect, move, and build strength together. Laci's work shows how wellness and empowerment can go hand in hand, and how joy itself can be an act of resistance.



Allyson Martinez

Through Brooklyn Level Up, Allyson Martinez is reimagining what community development can look like when residents lead the way. The organization advances racial equity through entrepreneurship, youth-led environmental justice, and community land trust advocacy. Their work has become a model for how local power is built and shared, block by block and business by business.



Meghan McNamara

For ten years, Meghan McNamara's The Octavia Project has been helping young people in Brooklyn imagine new futures for themselves and their city. Through free programs that blend science fiction, creative writing, art, and STEAM education, Meghan and her team have created spaces where curiosity, creativity, and confidence can thrive. Hundreds of young people have found their voice through the Octavia Project and have learned that imagination is one of the most powerful tools for youth empowerment.

THANK YOU TO OUR INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

CitizensNYC’s corporate, nonprofit, and foundation partners provide essential support for grassroots leaders and small businesses across New York City. In addition to funding, our partners make a difference through hundreds of volunteer hours, making connections and providing visibility for the leaders in our network, and hosting events that bring changemakers together.

We’re grateful for their partnership and support!



OUR PARTNERS IN CITY AND STATE GOVERNMENT

Government partners play a crucial role in amplifying the reach and impact of our grant programs in every corner of NYC.

CitizensNYC holds a unique \$75 million master contract with the City of New York, allowing us to partner with city agencies in large-scale efforts to ensure that neighborhood-based organizations can access public funding. In the past three years, we partnered with seven city agencies to identify more than 500 local groups and distribute more than \$26M in funding for work on weather emergency response, youth civic engagement, job access, free childcare enrollment, and more. Partnerships include:



\$19,900,000

Participatory Budgeting



\$595,000

Job Seeker Support



\$2,000,000

LGBTQ+ Emergency Fund



\$390,000

DEI Planning & Policy



\$2,100,000
Climate Resilience



\$1,450,000
Enrollment Support



\$193,000
Youth Leadership Councils

CitizensNYC works closely with elected leaders, including partnering on community outreach in every city council district. We're grateful for the support of City Council, State Senate, and State Assembly representatives, which enables us to expand access to resources for community groups throughout the city.



JOIN US IN LIFTING UP LOCAL LEADERS

Our community of partners and supporters makes our impact in NYC neighborhoods possible, and we hope that you will join us in investing in local leaders across the five boroughs.

DONATE to support CitizensNYC grantee partners across New York City.

VOLUNTEER to directly support the initiatives our partners are leading in their neighborhoods. If your organization would like to join CitizensNYC for a volunteer event, email Diane Kim at dkim@citizensnyc.org.



AMPLIFY CitizensNYC grant opportunities and partner stories by [signing up for our monthly newsletter](#) and following CitizensNYC on social media:



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