

## **Resilient Communities Project Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2017–2018 Partnership**

The University of Minnesota (U of MN) is accepting **letters of intent** from cities and counties that wish to apply to be the community partner for the Resilient Communities Project (RCP) for the **2017–2018 academic year** (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018).

Based on feedback from previous community partners and applicants to the program, this year RCP has instituted the following two-phase application process to make the process easier and less time-consuming for applicants:

**Phase I: Letter of Intent to Apply.** The purpose of the letter of intent (LOI) is to demonstrate your community's interest in, organizational support for, and financial and staff capacity to support a one-year partnership with RCP. Timeline: Call issued July 18, 2016; LOI due September 15, 2016; notification by September 30, 2016 if invited to submit a formal application.

**Phase II: Program Application.** Based on the LOI, selected communities will be invited to apply to the RCP program. The purpose of the application is to identify and describe specific projects, staff project leads, and community partners for the one-year partnership with RCP. Timeline: Invitation to submit an application transmitted by September 30, 2016; program application due February 15, 2017; selected community partner announced by March 15, 2017; partnership begins July 1, 2017 and ends June 30, 2018.

Detailed instructions for submitting a Letter of Intent and Program Application are provided below.

### **I. RCP Program Overview**

RCP facilitates year-long partnerships between the U of MN and one selected community in Minnesota. Through the partnership, students and faculty from across the University collaborate with the community partner to address its self-defined sustainability-related needs through course-based projects. The collaboration results in on-the-ground impact and momentum for a community working toward a more sustainable and livable future. Cities, counties, and clusters of communities (for example, along a transportation corridor, around a regional center, or within a watershed) are eligible. To minimize travel time and costs, applicant communities should ideally be located within a two-hour drive of the Twin Cities, where RCP is based. Communities located further away from the Twin Cities will be considered if additional funds are contributed for overnight travel costs. Former and current community partners

include the City of Minnetonka (2012–2013), City of North St. Paul (2013–2014), City of Rosemount (2014–2015), Carver County (2015–2016), and City of Brooklyn Park (2016–2017).

The RCP model provides our partner community with efficient access to the broad base of sustainability expertise at the U of MN. RCP staff work closely with the partner community to match their projects with students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines—from architecture, planning, and engineering to environmental sciences, public health, and the humanities. Most projects involve multiple disciplines in order to address problems from diverse perspectives. Assistance is available related to all aspects of sustainability (e.g., environmental health, economic opportunity, social equity, and community livability) and all stages of sustainability efforts (analysis, planning, design, implementation, and evaluation). Through work with RCP, the community is able to enhance its own capacity to advance local sustainability and resilience in a cost-effective manner. U of MN students benefit from real-world opportunities to apply their knowledge and training, as well as bringing energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to local problems and opportunities.

The partner community must support the effort through dedicated staff time and a local financial contribution. The selection process is competitive.

### ***Benefits of Partnership with RCP***

RCP provides numerous benefits for the community partner, including:

- a high rate of return on investment, with thousands of hours of concentrated student work on community-identified projects
- access to an interdisciplinary group of faculty with first-hand knowledge of cutting-edge sustainability research and practice
- data collection, analysis, research, concept plans, designs, and policy recommendations that can energize staff, increase the range of options available, and get “stuck” projects moving
- greater support from residents for proposed solutions through student outreach in the community
- publicity in local, state, regional, and national publications and venues, highlighting your community as a forward-thinking and sustainable community
- faculty, students, and staff who serve as ambassadors for your community by sharing their experiences through conference presentations, community meetings, and informal conversations
- engaged students with on-the-ground knowledge of the community who may be candidates for future internships or staff positions

## **II. How the RCP Partnership Works**

RCP will select one community partner for the 2017–2018 academic year (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018). Staff from RCP and the community will begin work on the year-long collaboration with a series of orientation and planning workshops in summer 2017 to introduce community partner staff to the program, refine the scope of locally identified projects, begin matching

projects with relevant graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses at the U of MN, and involve local project stakeholders/partners in the collaboration.

### ***RCP Program Timeline***

- **March 2017:** Community partner for 2017–2018 announced.
- **May 2017:** RCP End-of-Year Celebration for City of Brooklyn Park partnership (our next community partner will be introduced at this event)
- **Summer 2017:** (1) Orientation workshops for all participating staff from the partner community; (2) RCP and the community refine the scope of individual projects, match projects with appropriate U of MN courses, and meet with faculty to develop formal scopes-of-work for each project and participating course; (3) community staff provide background information, reports, and data for projects; (4) RCP and community partner develop and sign formal contract.
- **Fall 2017:** (1) RCP kick-off event in the partner community (early to mid-September); (2) fall-semester classes work on RCP projects (September–December); (3) final scoping of spring semester courses (October–December).
- **Spring 2018:** (1) Spring-semester classes work on RCP projects (January–May); (2) fall-semester student reports delivered to community.
- **May 2018:** RCP End-of-Year Celebration on the U of MN campus
- **Summer 2018:** (1) Spring-semester student reports delivered to community; (2) optional follow-up work with RCP staff to outline next steps and priorities for the community's efforts to advance sustainability and resilience.

### ***University Commitment***

During summer 2017, RCP staff and faculty will meet with community staff and project partners/stakeholders to develop a comprehensive scope-of-work document for each project and participating U of MN course to guide work throughout the semester. The scope of work will include a problem statement, potential issues or directions for student exploration, specific project activities, final deliverables, and a project timeline. Depending on the community's matching funds available, RCP has the capacity to address 10–30 local projects during the partnership year, matching each project with one or more courses to complete the necessary work. Projects will be carried out as part of U of MN courses offered during the fall (September through December 2017) and spring (January through May 2018) semesters. Work will be completed by graduate students or upper-division undergraduate students, with direct oversight by faculty instructors.

Coordination and support provided by RCP staff offers significant benefits and efficiencies over stand-alone projects in which the community might participate with an individual faculty member. RCP staff with expertise in sustainability, project management, and communications will provide ongoing support throughout the semester to ensure high-quality outcomes that meet the partner community's needs. Support will include coordinating University resources, scheduling and facilitating project scoping meetings, identifying and coordinating delivery of data and background information for projects as needed, maintaining a partnership website,

coordinating communications and media outreach about the partnership, soliciting periodic feedback from participants, and troubleshooting projects as needed.

Outcomes from each University course will be documented in a final report and/or presentation at the conclusion of the fall or spring semester. Project results will be shared with the community, and disseminated through the RCP website, social media, and traditional media outlets. All student work will be licensed through a Creative Commons agreement that allows the community partners to reproduce, distribute, or adapt the work for other purposes.

### ***Community Staff Commitment***

A key element of a successful RCP partnership is commitment and involvement from community staff. The community partner must have one or more organizational champions for RCP, preferably a city/county manager or another senior staff person within the organization who has the authority and ability to direct and motivate staff to participate in the partnership. As part of its application, the community will be expected to identify a senior staff person who will be the primary **program coordinator** for the partnership, serving as a liaison between the community and RCP, and working directly with RCP's director and program staff to oversee all projects. The program coordinator should be engaged enough in each project to know the staff involved and to understand the project's scope and current status. The program coordinator's time commitment will vary based upon the number of projects and their level of involvement with each project. *In general, however, they should expect to spend an average of 5–7 hours per week for 12 months to coordinate 15 projects involving 20–30 courses (or more if additional projects are undertaken).* The number of hours will vary, with more time required during project scoping and initial foundational work in support of the partnership, and less time required once the partnership and classes are underway. If you are applying to RCP as a multi-community partnership, each government entity may be asked to designate a program coordinator responsible for all projects involving that entity.

For each project that is successfully matched with one or more U of MN courses, the community partner will be expected to identify a **project lead** who will be the primary point of contact for students and faculty working on that project. The work of project leads may include preparing background materials for students; presenting projects during class meeting times on the U of MN Minneapolis or St. Paul campuses; accompanying students on site visits in the community; attending project meetings with RCP students, faculty, and staff; coordinating the participation of residents, community organizations, or other stakeholders in the project; participating in reviews of student work throughout the semester; coordinating and attending final presentations of student work on the U of MN campuses and/or in the community; and participating in kickoff and end-of-year events. Depending on the number of courses matched with the project, *project leads should anticipate spending an average of 2–4 hours per week on each project they are responsible for during each semester the project is in process.* In our experience, to ensure sufficient time is available to devote to participation in RCP, no staff member should be the lead on more than 2–3 projects.

During summer 2017, project leads will be expected to participate in a half-day orientation workshop and provide background documents for each project for which they are responsible,

including but not limited to background reports and memos, GIS maps and data layers, community datasets, aerial photographs, prior concept plans, and computer-aided drawings.

### **Financial Cost of the Program**

RCP offers our partner community a high level of access to the wide-ranging expertise at the University of Minnesota related to fostering sustainable and resilient communities, as well as significant assistance matching, scoping, coordinating, and managing projects. RCP staff identify and facilitate one-to-one connections between city staff and faculty members from a variety of disciplines to develop meaningful projects that respond directly to local needs. RCP provides program management and project coordination support; reimbursement of project-related travel and material costs to support student participation in the program; student and faculty site visits to and field work in the community; compilation and distribution of final reports and other deliverables; publicity for and hosting of kickoff and end-of-year celebration events; student-created materials for display in the partner community; regular publicity through social, print, and broadcast media; and digital archiving of student work products. RCP works closely with the University Relations Office and University News Service to coordinate publicity, and with University Libraries to coordinate the network of sustainability resources available to students and the partner community. The value of these items is conservatively estimated at \$250,000 to \$300,000 for the partnership year.

RCP receives some funding and in-kind support from the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), but we also require a **local financial contribution** from our partner community. Partner communities may choose to fund their local contribution through a collaboration with other groups, such as county and state agencies, school and watershed districts, private developers, business partners, and chambers of commerce. Regardless of where these funds are obtained from, **the selected partner community is responsible for acting as the fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making two lump-sum payments to RCP, one no later than August 31, 2017, and a second no later than February 15, 2018.**

The cost of the program is dependent on the number of projects included in the partnership, which impacts both our staffing needs and the direct costs of delivering the program. For the 2017–2018 academic year, our fee structure is as follows:

- **For 10 to 20 projects:** \$40,000 + \$2000 for each project successfully matched with one or more courses (not to exceed a total of \$80,000 for 20 projects matched)
- **For 21 to 30 projects:** \$60,000 + \$2,000 for each project successfully matched with one or more courses (not to exceed a total of \$120,000 for 30 projects matched)

### **III. Application Process**

RCP is available to assist you with your application at any stage—including introducing the RCP program and model to staff, elected officials, or potential project partners; assisting with preparing a letter of intent; helping to brainstorm ideas for or frame potential projects; and finalizing your application for submission to RCP.

### **Application Process Timeline**

- **July 18, 2016:** RCP issues call for letters of intent for 2017–2018 partnership.
- **July to September 2016:** RCP staff are available for informational presentations about the program to city staff, elected officials, or potential partner organizations and agencies.
- **September 15, 2016:** letters of intent due to RCP **by 12:00 midnight CST.**
- **September 30, 2016:** Notification to communities that are invited to submit a formal proposal to RCP.
- **October 2016 to February 2017:** RCP staff are available for phone conferences and in-person meetings to discuss potential projects with communities, as well as for informational presentations to staff, elected officials, or potential partner organizations and agencies. *We strongly suggest communities that intend to apply to the program schedule one or more in-person visits with RCP staff to discuss individual projects that may be included in the application.*
- **February 15, 2017:** Applications are due to RCP **by 12:00 midnight CST.**
- **March 15, 2017:** RCP notifies the community selected for the 2017–2018 partnership. RCP and the community coordinate media to publicly announce the partnership.

### **Letter of Intent Components**

The letter of intent (LOI) should demonstrate your community’s interest in, organizational support for, and financial and staff capacity to support a one-year partnership with RCP. The LOI should be a **maximum of eight (8) double-spaced pages** (not including letters of support). For full consideration, your LOI must include all of the following:

1. **Community Information:** Provide the name of your community, the name of your community manager/administrator, and the name and contact information (email, phone, mailing address, department, and staff role) of the person who will serve as your RCP program coordinator (see p. 4) and who will be the primary contact for your application going forward.
2. **Sustainability Statement:** Provide a statement that demonstrates your community’s interest in and commitment to sustainability and resilience, as well as how a partnership with the Resilient Communities Project will both build upon and advance these efforts. If your community has a sustainability action plan, strategic plan, or other adopted document that demonstrates this commitment, you should explicitly reference this document in your application and provide a URL where it can be viewed online.
3. **Administrative Capacity:** A successful partnership will require an ongoing commitment of staff time to coordinate and manage individual projects and the overall partnership. This section should demonstrate the community’s general capacity to manage individual projects; effectively engage community partners or stakeholders; provide updates to elected officials, senior staff, residents, and others not directly involved in projects; and administer the overall partnership with the University.

4. **Proposed Projects:** Provide a list and short (1–2 sentence) descriptions of **at least 10 and no more than 30 potential projects** to be included in the partnership. Projects should address high-priority issues for the community, and involve research or technical assistance appropriate for graduate-level work. We understand the actual list of projects may change if your community is invited to submit a formal application, but the list should serve to provide a general idea of the types of projects and topics your community is interested in pursuing. For a list of projects proposed by our past partner communities, visit [rcp.umn.edu](http://rcp.umn.edu) and select the Communities tab.
5. **Public Involvement:** Meaningfully engaging residents and other stakeholders can be critical to the success of local sustainability efforts. How will the public and stakeholders be informed about and involved in the RCP partnership if you were selected as our community partner?
6. **Long-Term Benefits:** Describe what you anticipate as the long-term benefits and/or outcomes of a partnership with RCP.
7. **Demonstration of Support:** Include letters of support or resolutions from one or more of the following: city/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected governing body, senior staff or department heads.
8. **Acknowledgement of Local Financial Contribution:** Include an acknowledgement of the financial contribution required to participate in the program if your community is selected (for 10 to 20 projects—not to exceed \$80,000; for 21 to 30 projects—not to exceed \$120,000).

### ***Submitting Your Letter of Intent***

Letters of intent are due **September 15, 2016, by 12:00 midnight CST**. E-mail your completed LOI in PDF format to: Mike Greco, RCP Director, [mgreco@umn.edu](mailto:mgreco@umn.edu).

### ***Formal Application Components***

If your community is invited to submit a formal application to RCP based on your LOI, the individual identified as the primary contact for your application (see item #1 above) will be notified no later than September 30, 2016. If invited to submit an application, your application must include all of the following:

1. **Proposal development process:** Briefly describe the process by which your proposal was developed, including how and by whom this process was led, how project leads participated in the selection of projects and development of project descriptions, how elected officials and senior staff were involved in the process, and how potential community partners or stakeholders were engaged.
2. **Proposed Projects:** Provide detailed individual descriptions of at least 10 and no more than 30 well-formulated projects. Projects should address high-priority issues for the community, and involve research or technical assistance appropriate for graduate-level work. Note that this list of projects may differ from the list originally submitted with

your letter of intent. For each project, you should provide the following information:

- A. **Project name/title.**
- B. **Project lead.** Identify one community staff person who will serve as the primary contact for the project, as well as their title and department, e-mail address, and phone number.
- C. **A one- to two-paragraph description of the project.** What is the purpose of the project? Why is this project important to the community at this time? What are the community's ultimate goals or objectives related to the project?
- D. **2–3 specific questions, issues, or problems you want students to address.**
- E. **An explanation of how student work would be used.** How will work that addresses these questions/issues/ideas/problems advance the community's efforts related to this project?
- F. **One or more specific impacts of the project relative to community sustainability and resilience.** This section should explicitly reference the relationship of the project to local actions, plans, or priorities, and to the sustainability statement included with your original letter of intent.
- G. **Existing plans, reports, data, or other information** relevant to the project. If these are available online, include a web link.
- H. **Community partners or stakeholders** (beyond city/county staff) that will be invited to participate in the project. Describe specifically how these individuals or organizations will be involved, what they will do, and how their participation will benefit the project.

We strongly encourage applicants to contact RCP Director Mike Greco ([mgreco@umn.edu](mailto:mgreco@umn.edu), 612-625-7501) for assistance developing their project list and project descriptions.

3. **Next Steps:** Describe the community's general strategy for identifying "next steps" for individual projects at the conclusion of the year-long RCP partnership in June 2018. What will the community do with all of the information produced from the partnership?
4. **Demonstration of Support:** Include any additional letters of support for the partnership not included with your letter of intent, including support from partner organizations/agencies or funding entities.
5. **Local Financial Contribution:** Include a description of the source of funds to support the financial contribution required to participate in the program (for 10 to 20 projects—not to exceed \$80,000; for 21 to 30 projects—not to exceed \$120,000). Note that regardless of where funds are obtained from, **the selected partner community is responsible for acting as the fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making two lump-sum payments to RCP, one no later than August 31, 2017, and a second no later than February 15, 2018.**



## ***Submitting Your Application***

**Applications are due February 15, 2017, by 12:00 midnight CST.** E-mail your completed application in PDF format to: Mike Greco, RCP Director, [mgreco@umn.edu](mailto:mgreco@umn.edu).

## ***Evaluation Criteria***

RCP will evaluate letters of intent and formal applications based on the following criteria:

- 1. Top-Level Support and Administrative Capacity:** City/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected officials, and/or department heads indicate a willingness to direct organization staff to participate in RCP program, and provide resources and devote time to identified projects. Community has sufficient staff capacity to engage successfully in a year-long partnership across multiple projects, and to carry work forward at the conclusion of the partnership.
- 2. Clear Sustainability and Resilience Focus:** Projects clearly build upon and advance the community's overall sustainability and resilience efforts, and include specific sustainability- or resilience-related goals such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering active living, supporting alternative modes of transportation or energy generation, enhancing social equity, enhancing public participation opportunities, engaging underserved or marginalized groups, creating a stronger sense of community or place, enhancing livability, conserving or restoring environmental resources, preserving or enhancing ecosystem services, increasing housing density or mix, improving urban form, reducing energy use, finding adaptive reuses for existing structures, redeveloping underutilized land parcels, promoting equitable economic development, or ensuring fiscally prudent infrastructure investments. *[Note: This list is for illustration only and is by no means exhaustive.]*
- 3. Project Relevance and Impact:** Projects are well formulated and directly relate to the community's stated short-term and long-term strategic goals (ideally as embodied in a strategic plan or work plan). Projects should demonstrate the potential to have a measurable positive impact on community sustainability and resilience. Demonstrated relationship to community comprehensive or sustainability plans, policies, programs, or indicators is also helpful.
- 4. Community Engagement:** Community demonstrates a commitment to meaningfully and appropriately engage residents and other stakeholders throughout the partnership as a means of integrating local knowledge, and strengthening and broadening support for local sustainability and resilience efforts.
- 5. Likelihood of Match with University Courses:** Projects must be within the capability of University of Minnesota faculty and graduate students, and should involve appropriate research and/or technical assistance needs, not menial tasks or low-level administrative work. RCP will identify faculty who are able and willing to supervise course-based projects based on their curricular and research needs and interests. Coordinating with RCP as your organization develops its project list will help facilitate a strong match.

Note, however, that RCP cannot guarantee that all locally identified projects will be matched with a course.

- 6. External Partnerships:** Projects that involve other organizations—such as transportation districts, school districts, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, business or professional organizations, businesses, or research or educational institutions—are especially desirable. Your formal application should specifically indicate how these partnerships would function and how participation of these entities would enhance the project.