UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus   *Resilient Communities Project*   *330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center*
301–19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Office: 612-625-7501
Fax: 612-626-0273
Email: rcp@umn.edu
Website: www.rcp.umn.edu

Resilient Communities Project
Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for
2018–2019 Partnership

The University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (RCP) is accepting letters of intent from **cities, counties, tribal governments, and regional partnerships** to be the community partner for the Resilient Communities Project (RCP) for the academic year beginning fall 2018. The successful applicant will benefit from approximately **20,000 to 60,000 hours of work** by University of Minnesota students and faculty, from a variety of disciplines, working to advance the partner's sustainability and resilience projects. Prior partners have included Carver County, and the Cities of Minnetonka, North St. Paul, Rosemount, Brooklyn Park, and Ramsey. The partner city/county must support the effort through **dedicated staff time** and a **local financial contribution**. The selection process is competitive.

This is the first phase of a two-phase application process:

> **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 August 15, 2017; **LOI due October 15, 2017**; notification by October 31, 2017 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, the staff who will lead them, and the participation of external partners for the one-year partnership with RCP. Timeline: Invitation to submit an application transmitted by October 31, 2017; **program application due February 15, 2018**; selected community partner announced by March 15, 2018; partnership preparation begins June 15, 2018.

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

I. RCP Program Overview

The Resilient Communities Project (rcp.umn.edu) facilitates year-long partnerships between the U of MN and communities in Minnesota. Through the program, students and faculty from across the University collaborate with a city/county partner to address the partner's self-defined research and technical assistance needs through course-based projects. The collaboration results in on-the-ground impact and momentum for a community working toward a more livable, resilient, and sustainable future. Cities, counties, tribal governments, and regional partnerships 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. However, communities 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 Cities of Minnetonka (2012–2013), North St. Paul (2013–2014), Rosemount (2014–2015), Brooklyn Park (2016–2017), and Ramsey (2017–2018), as well as Carver County (2015–2016).

The RCP model provides our partner community with efficient access to research and expertise available anywhere within the University of Minnesota. 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, business, public health, and the humanities. Most projects involve multiple disciplines to better address problems from diverse perspectives. Assistance is available related to **all aspects of community resilience and sustainability** (e.g., environmental health, economic opportunity, social equity, and community livability), at **all project stages** (analysis, planning, design, implementation, and evaluation), and across **all departments in the organization** (administration, human resources, corrections, police and fire, planning, environmental management, public works, engineering, communications, parks and recreation, finance, and more).

Past projects have aligned with a wide array of city and county goals, and have included:

- Conducting a cost-benefit analysis of potential storm water best management practices to improve water quality in impaired lakes and rivers
- Evaluating a housing rehabilitation loan program to determine why the program is underutilized
- Conducting a travelshed analysis to identify opportunities for extending public transit service
- Assessing the feasibility of live-work housing as an economic development strategy to revitalize downtown main street
- Designing a template for the finance department to use to produce a popular annual finance report
- Identifying goals, policies, and strategies for a municipal-level natural resources management plan
- Conducting outreach and engagement with manufactured home park residents to assess their public health and other service needs
- Recommending employment programs for recently released offenders to ensure a stable transition to life outside prison
- Creating a sustainable turf grass management program for parks and athletic fields to reduce irrigation and chemical inputs
- Evaluating the impacts and outcomes of a continuous improvement and innovation program
- Creating an outreach and engagement plan to encourage stronger relationships with renters
- Assessing the feasibility of a community kitchen or food hub as an economic development strategy

- Designing a wayfinding signage plan to encourage trail users to visit key destinations in a nearby downtown commercial area
- Proposing roadway and other improvements to provide safe routes to schools
- Implementing geographic information systems into field operations for public works staff
- Identifying successful school-based mental health models for at-risk youth
- Proposing historic preservation efforts and programming for an historic mid-1800s farmstead to maximize its potential as a historic attraction
- Identifying ecological restoration and interpretive options for a Mississippi Riverfront Greenway
- Creating emerald ash borer and European buckthorn management plans
- Assessing the need for training and development opportunities and stress and wellness programs for municipal staff
- Identifying opportunities for water conservation, capture, and reuse to reduce the consumption of potable water
- Conducting a community-wide greenhouse gas emissions audit
- Assessing the feasibility of using renewable energy sources to power municipal buildings
- Evaluating recruitment and retention strategies for police and fire departments
- Investigating programs, policies, and other strategies to make it easier for senior residents to age in place in their homes and community
- Identifying opportunities for shared parking, parking districts, and other strategies for reducing excess surface parking in a downtown commercial district
- Documenting case studies and best practices from suburban transit-oriented developments to inform planning for the Southwest Light-Rail Line

Benefits of Partnership with RCP

Through work with RCP, our community partner 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, insight, and innovative approaches to the discussion. Past partners have identified many benefits of partnering with RCP, including:

- a high rate of return on investment, with 20,000 to 60,000 hours of concentrated student work on your community-identified projects
- access to an interdisciplinary group of faculty with first-hand knowledge of cutting-edge resilience and sustainability research and practice
- data collection, analysis, research, case studies, concept plans, designs, and policy recommendations that can re-energize your staff, increase the range of options available, and get "stuck" projects moving again
- greater support from your residents for proposed solutions through student outreach in the community
- publicity in local, state, regional, and national publications and venues, highlighting your city or county 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 your community who may be candidates for future internships or staff positions

II. How the RCP Partnership Works

RCP will select one or more community partners for the 2018–2019 academic year (September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019). Staff from RCP and selected community partners will begin work on the year-long collaboration with a series of orientation and planning workshops in summer 2018 to introduce your staff to the program, and continue through fall and spring semesters, when U of MN students will work on your projects.

RCP Program Timeline

- **March 2018:** Community partner for 2018–2019 is announced.
- **May 2018:** RCP End-of-Year Celebration for City of Ramsey partnership (our next community partner will be introduced at this event)
- **Summer 2018:** (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 2018:** (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 2019:** (1) Spring-semester classes work on RCP projects (January–May); (2) fall-semester student reports delivered to community.
- **May 2019:** RCP End-of-Year Celebration on the U of MN campus
- **Summer 2019:** (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 2018, 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, a project timeline with milestones, specific project activities, and final deliverables.

Depending on the community's financial contribution, RCP has the capacity to address 5–30 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 2018) and spring (January through May 2019) 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 your community might participate with an individual faculty member. RCP staff with knowledge of the broad range of academic departments and disciplines at the U of MN and with expertise in sustainability and resilience, project management, and communications will provide ongoing support throughout the semester to ensure high-quality outcomes that meet our partner community's needs. Support will include recruiting and coordinating University staff and resources (students, faculty, courses), facilitating project scoping, 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, planning and staffing events, 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 your community, and disseminated through the RCP website. All student work will be licensed through a Creative Commons agreement that allows our community partners to reproduce, distribute, or adapt the work for other purposes.

Community Commitment

A key element of a successful RCP partnership is commitment and involvement from community staff. Our community partners 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 **RCP program coordinator** for the partnership**,** serving as a liaison between the community and RCP, and working directly with RCP's director, program staff, and faculty 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 personal level of involvement with each project. *In general, however, they should expect to spend an average of 10–15 hours per week for 12–15 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. (NOTE: 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. Project leads are responsible for preparing background materials (existing data, reports, plans, etc.) 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 <u>average</u> of 4–6 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 single staff member should be the lead on more than 2–3 projects at a time.

During summer 2018, project leads will be expected to participate in a half-day orientation workshop and to begin providing 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 knowledge and 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. The value of these items is 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 depend on 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, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, business partners, and chambers of commerce. Regardless of where these funds are obtained from, **the selected partner community is responsible for acting as the sole fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making two lump-sum payments to RCP, one no later than September 15, 2018, and a second no later than February 15, 2019**.

The cost of the RCP program is dependent on the number of projects the community proposes to undertake, which impacts both our staffing needs and the direct costs of delivering the program. For the 2018–2019 academic year, our fee structure is as follows:

- **For 3 to 10 projects**: $30,000 + $2,000 for each project successfully matched with one or more courses (not to exceed a total of $50,000 for 10 projects matched)
- **For 11 to 20 projects**: $45,000 + $2,000 for each project successfully matched with one or more courses (not to exceed a total of $85,000 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 help you with your application at any stage—from introducing the RCP program and model to your staff, elected city or county officials, or potential project partners to helping brainstorm ideas for projects or assisting with your letter of intent or application.

Application Process Timeline

- **August 15, 2017:** RCP issues call for letters of intent for 2017–2018 partnership.
- **August to October 2017:** RCP staff are available for informational presentations about the program to city staff, elected officials, or potential partner organizations and agencies.
- **October 15, 2017**: letters of intent due to RCP **by 12:00 midnight CST**.
- **October 31, 2017**: Notification to communities that are invited to submit a formal proposal to RCP.
- **November 2017 to February 2018:** RCP staff are available for in-person meetings to discuss project ideas with communities, as well as for informational presentations to staff, elected officials, or potential partner organizations. *We strongly suggest communities that intend to apply to the program schedule one or more in-person visits with RCP staff to discuss specific projects that may be included in the application.*
- **February 15, 2018:** Applications are due to RCP **by 12:00 midnight CST**.
- **March 15, 2018:** RCP notifies those communities selected for the 2018–2019 partnership. RCP and selected communities 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 (a) the name of your community, (b) current population and number of households, (c) annual budget, (d) the number of staff your city/county employs, (e) the name of your city/county manager or administrator, and (f) the name and contact information (email, phone, mailing address, department, and staff role) of the person who would serve as your RCP program coordinator (see p. 5) and who will be the primary contact for your application going forward.

2. **Sustainability and Resilience Statement:** Provide a statement that demonstrates (a) your community's interest in and commitment to sustainability and resilience, (b) how your community define and operationalizes these principles, and (c) 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 (a) manage the number of discrete projects you expect to propose for the partnership; (b) actively collaborate with students and faculty at the U of MN, including making regular trips to the Minneapolis of St. Paul campuses as needed; (c) effectively engage community partners or stakeholders where appropriate; (d) provide regular updates to elected officials, senior staff, appointed commissions, residents, and others not directly involved in projects; and (e) administer the overall year-long partnership with the University.

4. **Proposed Projects:** Provide a list and short (1–2 sentence) descriptions of **at least 5 and no more than 35 potential projects** to be included in the partnership. You may wish to propose more projects than you anticipate actually undertaking during the partnership since not all projects will be suitable for matching with university courses.

    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 and select the Communities tab.

5. **Public Involvement**: Meaningfully engaging residents and other stakeholders if often critical to the success of local sustainability and resilience efforts. Explain (a) how the public and stakeholders will be informed about and involved in the RCP partnership if you were selected as our community partner; (b) how this would build upon existing public outreach and engagement efforts; and (c) how these efforts would continue beyond the end of the formal RCP partnership in spring 2019.

6. **Long-Term Benefits**: Describe what you anticipate as the long-term benefits and/or outcomes of a partnership with RCP and the U of MN. How would this partnership help you "move the needle" on the key challenges and opportunities facing your community?

7. **Demonstration of Support:** Include letters of support or formal resolutions from one or more of the following: city/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected governing body (city council, county board), department heads, and partner organizations or agencies involved in the partnership.

8. **Acknowledgement of Local Financial Contribution:** Include an acknowledgement of the financial contribution required to participate in the program if your community is selected—not to exceed $50,000 for 5–10 projects, not to exceed $85,000 for 11–20 projects, and not to exceed $120,000 for 21–30 projects.

Submitting Your Letter of Intent

Letters of intent are due October 15, 2017, by 12:00 midnight CST. E-mail your completed LOI in a single PDF file to: Mike Greco, RCP Director, mgreco@umn.edu.

Formal Program Application Components

If your community is invited to submit a formal program application to RCP based on your LOI, the individual identified as the primary contact for your application (see item #1 on p. 8) will be notified no later than October 31, 2017. 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 (a) how and by whom this process was led, (b) how projects were identified and selected, (c) how project leads participated in the development of project descriptions, (d) how elected officials and senior staff were involved in the process, and (e) how potential community partners or stakeholders were identified and engaged.

2. **Proposed Projects:** Provide <u>detailed</u> individual descriptions of at least 5 and no more than 35 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 <u>each</u> project, you should provide the following information:

   A. **Project name/title.** Should be descriptive of the project, but can also be creative.

   B. **Project lead.** Identify one staff person who will serve as the primary contact for the project, as well as their job title, department, e-mail address, and phone number.

   C. **A one- to two-paragraph description of the project and its context.** What is the context for 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 or the larger community issues the project addresses? What is the purpose of the project and the work that students would do?

   D. **3–5 specific issues, questions, ideas, or problems you want students to address**. Consider what are the key things that would help to advance your

organization's or your community's efforts on this project or on the issues this project touches?

E. **An explanation of how student work would be used.** How will student research or technical assistance that addresses these questions/issues/ideas/problems advance the community's efforts related to this project/issue?

F. **One or more <u>specific</u> 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 background 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, 612-625-7501) for assistance developing their project list and project descriptions. The quality and clarity of these descriptions is an important criterion in the selection process.

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? How will this information be assimilated into the organization and shared with decision makers and the public? How will the work begun during the partnership be carried forward?

4. **Demonstration of Support:** Include any additional letters of support for the partnership not included with your original letter of intent, including support from partner organizations/agencies or from 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 5 to 10 projects—not to exceed $50,000; for 11 to 20 projects—not to exceed $85,000; 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 sole fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making two lump-sum payments to RCP, one no later than September 15, 2018, and a second no later than February 15, 2019.**

Submitting Your Application

Applications are due February 15, 2018, by 12:00 midnight CST. E-mail your completed application in a single PDF file to: Mike Greco, RCP Director, mgreco@umn.edu.

Evaluation Criteria

A selection committee will review, evaluate, and rank applications based on the following:

1. **Top-Level Support and Administrative Capacity:** City/county manager or administrator, elected officials, and department heads show a commitment to participate in the RCP program and to direct staff time and resources to the partnership. 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 the community's comprehensive or sustainability plans, or to 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 graduate students, and should involve appropriate research and/or technical assistance needs, not menial tasks or low-level administrative work. *[Note: Coordinating with RCP as you develop your project list will facilitate a strong match. However, RCP cannot guarantee all projects will be matched with a course.]*

6. **External Partnerships:** Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with other local entities (e.g. cities, counties, watershed districts, transportation districts, school districts, business or professional organizations, private funders, or research or educational institutions) to formulate projects and share costs. If applicable, your application should specifically indicate in what capacity these external partners would be involved, and how participation of these entities would enhance the partnership.