



Resilient Communities Project

Application Guidelines for the 2022–2023 Academic Year

The Resilient Communities Project (RCP, rcp.umn.edu) facilitates partnerships between local government agencies in Minnesota and the University of Minnesota, on projects designed to advance community sustainability, equity, and resilience. Projects may address a broad range of local issues and needs, but RCP especially encourages projects that address racial inequities and disparities in Minnesota.

Communities selected for an RCP partnership benefit from **applied research and technical assistance**, provided by graduate and professional students and faculty at the University from a variety of departments and disciplines. The scale of RCP partnerships is flexible, and can be sized to meet your agency's capacity and needs. Typically, partnerships range in size from 1 to 20 discrete projects, and in length from 6–18 months.

Eligibility: Cities, counties, tribal public entities, special districts (e.g., watershed, transit, park, school), and regional government agencies or collaboratives in Minnesota are eligible. The selection process is competitive.

Program Cost: RCP partners must support the partnership through both **dedicated staff time** and a **local financial contribution**. For the 2022–2023 academic year, the cost is **\$5,000 per project** for partnerships that involve 5 or more projects, or **\$6,000 per project** for partnerships that involve 1–4 projects.

Deadline for Proposals: Proposals are accepted at any time, but are due by the following dates to ensure eligibility for assistance during the time periods indicated:

- **January 15** for work to begin summer academic term (May to August)
- **April 15** for work to begin fall academic term (September to December)
- **August 15** for work to begin spring academic term (January to May)

Proposals must be submitted as a single PDF file to rcp@umn.edu.

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OVERVIEW OF RCP

The Resilient Communities Project (RCP) is a partnership between the University of Minnesota and local government agencies in Minnesota that engages students and faculty from across the university to work on *locally identified projects that advance community sustainability, equity, and resilience*. University faculty, graduate and professional students, and staff address the partner's research and technical assistance needs through course-based or independent student projects, providing easy and efficient access to research and expertise available anywhere within the University of Minnesota system.



Previous RCP partnerships have addressed projects on a host of local issues, including

- housing
- economic development
- public health and safety
- racial equity
- parks and recreation
- education
- public participation
- social services
- environmental stewardship
- transportation

RCP works closely with our partners to match projects with students and faculty from a **wide range of disciplines**. Assistance is available at **all project stages** (analysis, planning, design, implementation, and evaluation) and across **all departments in your agency** (administration, human resources, corrections, police and fire, planning, public health, public works, engineering, communications, parks and recreation, finance, environmental management, and more).

HOW AN RCP PARTNERSHIP WORKS

The partnership begins with a series of planning and orientation meetings to discuss your needs and goals for the partnership, negotiate a scope of work for each project, and learn how a partnership operates. Then University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff will actively collaborate with you on the projects during fall, spring, and summer academic terms, depending on your project timeline and course availability. Project deliverables are typically available at the end of each academic term.

Partner Community Commitment

A key element of a successful RCP partnership is commitment and involvement from partner community staff. **For each project submitted**, partner communities will be expected to identify a **project lead**—an individual staff member who will be the primary point of contact for U of MN students, faculty, and staff working on that project. Project leads are responsible for

- attending an initial RCP orientation session;
- participating in project scoping meetings;
- preparing and providing background materials related to the project;
- pitching projects to students and faculty during class meeting times on the U of MN Minneapolis or St. Paul campuses;
- leading site visits in the community;
- attending regular project meetings;
- initiating and coordinating the participation of residents, community organizations, or other stakeholders in the project;

- participating in periodic reviews of student work throughout the semester; and
- coordinating and attending final project presentations on the U of MN campuses and/or in the community.

Project leads should anticipate spending an average of 3–5 hours per week on each project they are responsible for during each semester the project is active.

RCP and University Commitment

RCP staff with knowledge of the broad range of academic departments and resources at the University and with expertise in community resilience, project management, and communications will provide **ongoing support to ensure high-quality outcomes that meet your agency’s needs**. This includes recruiting and coordinating university resources (students, faculty, staff, and courses), facilitating project scoping, identifying and coordinating delivery of data and background information for projects, maintaining a Basecamp project management system, coordinating communications and media outreach about the partnership, planning and staffing campus and community events, reimbursing project-related travel and material costs to support student and faculty participation in the program, promoting partnership activities through social and earned media, and troubleshooting projects as needed.

Outcomes from each University course, student team, or individual student that participates in a project will be documented in a **final presentation and report** (or other agreed-upon deliverable) at the conclusion of the project. All work products will be licensed through a Creative Commons agreement that allows your agency to reproduce, distribute, or adapt the work for non-commercial purposes.

Financial Cost of the Program

RCP receives some funding and in-kind support from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), but we depend on a **local financial contribution** from our partners to support program staffing and operations. The cost is currently **\$5,000 per project** for partnerships that include **5 or more projects**, or **\$6,000 per project** for partnerships that include from **1 to 4 projects**.

Each project will be matched with up to two (2) U of MN courses, student teams, or independent student researchers. If additional matches or other types of assistance (e.g., an intern) are desired, this may incur additional costs, pending your agency’s pre-approval.

Partners may choose to fund their local contribution through a collaboration with other groups, such as county and state agencies, watershed districts, private developers, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and chambers of commerce. Regardless of where funds are obtained, **the partner community is responsible for acting as the sole fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making payment to RCP for all projects that are successfully matched.**



HOW TO APPLY

Submitting Your Proposal

Proposals must be **submitted by email** as a single PDF file sent to rcp@umn.edu.

RCP staff are available to help with development of your proposal at any stage—from introducing the RCP program and model to staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders to helping brainstorm ideas for projects or preparing a proposal for submission. Please contact us at rcp@umn.edu for assistance or with questions.



Deadline for Proposals

Proposals are accepted at any time, but are due by the following dates to ensure eligibility for assistance during the time periods indicated:

- **January 15** for work to begin summer academic term (May to August)
- **April 15** for work to begin fall academic term (September to December)
- **August 15** for work to begin spring academic term (January to May)

Upon receipt, RCP staff will follow up within two weeks to discuss your proposal

Required Proposal Components

- 1. Partner Information:** Provide (a) the name of your agency or community, (b) current population and number of households in the geographic area you service or represent, (c) annual budget, (d) the total number of staff your agency employs.
- 2. Proposed Project(s):** Provide individual descriptions of from **one to twenty (1–20) projects**. Projects should address high-priority issues for your agency and the community it serves, and involve **research questions or technical assistance needs** appropriate for graduate-level student work. Projects should demonstrably advance community sustainability, equity, or resilience. For suggestions on how to choose projects, visit the “Selecting Projects for an RCP Partnership” page on our website at <https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects>.

For each project, provide the following information:

- a. Project title.** Should be descriptive of the project, but can also be creative.
- b. Project lead.** Identify one staff person in your agency who will serve as the primary contact for the project, as well as their job title, department, e-mail address, and phone number. This individual must be able to commit an average of 3–5 hours per week to the project each academic semester that the project is active throughout the partnership.
- c. A 1–2 paragraph description of the project.** What is the **context** for the project? Why is this project a **priority** at this time? What are your agency’s **ultimate goals or objectives** related to the project or the larger issues the project addresses? How will student work be **used by your agency or community** to further these goals/objectives?
- d. 3–5 specific issues, questions, ideas, or problems for consideration that you want students to address.** What are the key things that would help to advance local efforts on this project or on the issues this project touches?

- e. **Project impact.** How will this project serve to **advance sustainability, equity, and/or resilience** in your community? Who will benefit?
- f. **Community partners or stakeholders** (external to your agency) that will be invited to participate in the project. This might include but is not limited to other government agencies, nonprofit or community organizations, resident or neighborhood groups, or local businesses. Describe specifically how these individuals or organizations will be involved, what they will do, and how their participation will benefit the project. *NOTE: It is NOT necessary to include partners or stakeholders for every project proposed.*

Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to contact RCP during preparation of their proposal to discuss proposed projects and ensure they are within the capacity of RCP and appropriate for student work.

- 3. **Demonstration of Support:** Include letter(s) or formal resolution(s) supporting your agency's application to and participation in the Resilient Communities Project from **one or more** of the following: city/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected governing body (city council, county board, etc.), relevant department heads. If appropriate, you may also wish to include demonstrations of support from partner/stakeholder organizations or agencies, and/or external funding entities.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

RCP will evaluate your proposal based on the following criteria:

- 1. **Top-Level Support and Administrative Capacity:** Senior staff show a commitment to participate in the RCP program and to direct staff time and resources to the partnership.
- 2. **Clear Project Focus:** Projects are well formulated, issues or questions for investigation are defined, and there is a clear project goal.
- 3. **Project Relevance and Impact:** Clear description of how results will be used, what the impact will be, and how this builds upon or advances the partner's overall sustainability, equity, or resilience efforts.
- 4. **Community Engagement:** Where appropriate, projects include a commitment to meaningfully engage through the partnership those residents and other stakeholders directly affected by the issue, as a means of integrating local knowledge and concerns.
- 5. **External Partnerships:** Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with other local entities (e.g. neighboring cities, counties, watershed districts, transportation districts, school districts, business or professional organizations, private funders, research or educational institutions) to formulate projects, share partnership costs, and broaden support for any policies, programs, or other initiatives that result from working with the University.
- 6. **Likelihood of Match with University Courses:** Projects must be within the capability of University of Minnesota graduate/professional students, and should involve appropriate research or technical assistance needs, not menial tasks or low-level administrative work. *NOTE: While RCP works diligently to match projects, we cannot guarantee matches for all projects.*