Special Request for Proposals:
Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Application Information for the 2020–2021 Academic Year

The University of Minnesota’s Resilient Communities Project (RCP, rcp.umn.edu), in partnership with the Metropolitan Council (metrocouncil.org), is accepting proposals from townships, cities, and counties located in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area for partnerships during the University’s 2020–2021 academic year.

This special call for proposals is intended for communities seeking to collaborate with the University of Minnesota on one to two (1–2) projects that build community resilience and implement elements of a locally adopted 2040 comprehensive plan. Successful applicants will benefit from work by University faculty, graduate and professional students, and staff from a variety of disciplines to provide research and technical assistance for locally identified projects that advance community resilience to economic, social, technological, and environmental changes, including those necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection process is competitive, and successful applicants must support the effort through dedicated staff time and a modest local financial contribution.

Eligibility: Townships, cities, and counties located in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. To be eligible, communities must be within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council.

Deadline for Proposals: June 15, 2020 at 11:59 PM. Proposals must be submitted by email as a single PDF file 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 your staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders to helping brainstorm ideas for projects. Contact rcp@umn.edu to get started!
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 resilience to economic, social, technological, and environmental changes. 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. RCP can match projects with students and faculty from a wide range of departments and disciplines relevant to your needs.

For this special request for proposals, RCP is partnering with the Metropolitan Council to provide matching funds to support participation in RCP by townships, cities, and counties within the Council’s jurisdiction. Funds will offset the cost of the program to communities by providing a portion of the required local financial contribution.

HOW AN RCP PARTNERSHIP WORKS

For this special request for proposals, RCP will select up to ten (10) partner communities for the 2020–2021 academic year (September 2020 to August 2021). The collaboration will begin with a series of planning and orientation meetings in summer 2020, with U of MN students, faculty, and staff actively working on projects beginning in fall (September) or spring (January) semesters, depending on availability. During summer 2021, RCP and the Metropolitan Council will work with participating communities to document outcomes and next steps, facilitate peer learning among participants, and translate project findings and recommendations for broader use in communities throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

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—a single 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.

During summer 2021, project leads and other relevant staff and stakeholders from the partner community will be expected to participate in follow-up discussions and interviews about the project, the project outcomes, and how other communities might benefit from the work.
**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 staff and resources (students, faculty, 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 or independent student team 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 others to reproduce, distribute, or adapt the work for non-commercial purposes.

**Metropolitan Council Commitment**

The regional policy development guide, *Thrive MSP 2040*, includes policies on sustainability and implementation strategies for building resilience in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region. The Metropolitan Council has focused on performing resilience planning for its infrastructure and operations, while also providing technical assistance to local communities to perform their own work on resilience and sustainability planning. Since 2015, the Metropolitan Council has engaged with local communities in providing technical assistance on planning for resilience in this current comprehensive planning cycle. Such assistance has increased the local commitment to building more resilient communities.

This partnership with RCP allows the Council the opportunity to assist communities in meeting the commitments outlined within their 2040 comprehensive plans, while also promoting good practices in the region through the provision of technical resources to assist other communities with the implementation of their resilience and sustainability policies.

The Council commits to providing technical assistance and feedback to participating communities throughout the project duration, including assisting participating communities in translating the project outcomes, framework, and lessons learned to a larger audience within the region. The Council, in partnership with RCP, will coordinate the summer 2021 work of packaging the project results into technical assistance for other communities.

**FINANCIAL COST OF THE PROGRAM**

For projects proposed and accepted under this special request for proposals, the Metropolitan Council will provide matching funds to offset the cost of participation in the program. The local financial contribution for selected communities is **$2,000 per project**, with a **$5,000 per-project**
match from the Metropolitan Council. This guarantees that each project will be matched with up to two (2) University of Minnesota graduate or professional courses or independent student teams, as well as supplemental assistance to document project outcomes, facilitate peer learning, and translate project findings and recommendations for broader use. Any additional matches with U of MN courses or student teams may incur additional costs (pending your agency’s pre-approval of such expenditures).

APPLICATION PROCESS

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. Contact us at rcp@umn.edu for assistance or with questions.

Deadline for Proposals

Proposals must be received by June 15, 2020 at 11:59 PM. Communities selected for participation will be notified by the end of June 2020.

Required Proposal Components

1. **Partner Information:** Provide (a) the name of your community, (b) estimated current population and number of households in the geographic area you service or represent, (c) total annual budget, (d) the total number of staff your agency employs, and (e) a link to your most recent Metropolitan Council–approved comprehensive plan.

2. **Proposed Project(s):** Provide individual descriptions of one to three (1–3) projects (up to two of which may be selected for the partnership). Projects should address high-priority issues for your community, involve research questions or technical assistance needs appropriate for graduate-level student work, and must tie directly to the implementation of one or more elements of your community’s adopted 2040 comprehensive plan. Projects should demonstrably advance community resilience to economic, social, technological, or environmental changes, and may include changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preference will be given to projects that provide replicable practices or frameworks for other Twin Cities metropolitan area communities, use Metropolitan Council resources, and function as examples and studies for future Council workshops or training sessions to share best practices and lessons learned.

Project proposals should be consistent with the community’s 2040 comprehensive plan, while indicating conformance and consistency with Council plans and policies.
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 the U of MN, and appropriate for student work.

For each project, provide the following information:

a. **Project name/title.** Should be descriptive of the project.

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. *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, as well as occasional time during summer 2020 and summer 2021.*

c. **A 1–2 paragraph description of the project.** What is the context for the project? Why is this project important at this time? What are your community’s ultimate goals/objectives related to the project or the larger issues the project addresses? How will the student work be used to further the goals of your comprehensive plan?

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. **Resilience impact.** RCP defines resilience as *the capacity of individuals, institutions, communities, and natural systems to survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of economic, social, technological, and environmental changes, stresses, and shocks.* How will this project serve to advance resilience in your community?

f. **Community partners or stakeholders.** Identify partners or stakeholders (external to your agency) that will participate in the project—for example, 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.*

g. **Statement confirming consistency and conformance with authorized and adopted plans.** The proposal should include a short statement confirming that the project conforms to and is consistent with the community’s comprehensive plan, and the plans and policies of the Metropolitan Council.

3. **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, etc.), relevant department heads, proposed partner organizations or agencies, proposed external funding entities.
Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Staff from RCP and the Metropolitan Council 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 Resilience Focus**: Projects clearly build upon and advance the community’s overall resilience efforts, and include specific resilience-related goals—for example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering active living, managing the impacts of COVID-19, reducing turnover among staff, supporting alternative modes of transportation or energy generation, enhancing social equity, engaging underserved or marginalized groups, increasing and improving public participation and volunteer opportunities, creating a stronger sense of community or place, enhancing livability, increasing government transparency or accountability, 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, issues or questions for investigation are clear, and projects demonstrate the potential to have a measurable positive impact on community resilience.

4. **Community Engagement**: Projects include 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 community support for local resilience efforts.

5. **Likelihood of a University Match**: Projects must be within the capability of University of Minnesota graduate or professional students, and should involve appropriate research and/or technical assistance needs, not menial tasks or low-level administrative work. *RCP works hard to match projects; however, we cannot guarantee matches for all projects.*

6. **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 and share partnership costs.

7. **Shared learning**: Partner community staff should demonstrate a willingness to assist RCP and the Metropolitan Council in distilling the project experience to inform the creation of technical resources that can be used by other communities in the region.