The Resilient Communities Project

New! Small-Scale RCP Partnership Opportunity

Application Information for the 2019–2020 Academic Year

The University of Minnesota’s Resilient Communities Project (RCP, rcp.umn.edu) is accepting applications from cities, counties, tribal governments, special districts, and regional government agencies or collaboratives for our new Small-Scale RCP Partnerships for the 2019–2020 academic year.

The Small-Scale RCP Partnership opportunity is intended for communities seeking to collaborate with RCP on one to five (1–5) projects. Successful applicants will benefit from work by University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff, from a variety of disciplines, to provide research and technical assistance with locally identified projects that advance community resiliency. The selection process is competitive, and the partner must support the effort through dedicated staff time and a local financial contribution.

Proposals are accepted at any time throughout the year. You can submit your proposal online at https://z.umn.edu/apply-small-rcp or email it as a single PDF file to rcp@umn.edu.

RCP staff are available to help with development of your application 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

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 resiliency, sustainability, and livability projects in collaboration with the partner. Students and faculty 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 works closely with our partners to match projects with students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines. Assistance is available related to all aspects of community resiliency (e.g., environmental health, economic opportunity, social equity, 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, public health, environmental management, public works, engineering, communications, parks and recreation, finance, and more).

HOW AN RCP PARTNERSHIP WORKS

RCP will select one or more partners for the 2019–2020 academic year (September 2019 to August 2020). The collaboration will begin with a series of planning and orientation meetings, with U of MN students actively working on projects beginning in fall (September 2019) or spring (January 2020) semesters, depending on your project timeline and course availability.

Partner Community Commitment

A key element of a successful RCP partnership is commitment and involvement from partner staff. For each project submitted, partner communities will be expected to identify a project lead—a staff member who will be the primary point of contact for students and faculty working on that project. Project leads are responsible for attending an initial RCP orientation session; participating in project scoping meetings; preparing background materials for students and faculty; pitching projects during class meeting times on the U of MN Minneapolis or St. Paul campuses; leading students on 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 presentations of student work 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**

The coordination and staff support RCP provides offers significant benefits and efficiencies over stand-alone projects your organization might undertake with an individual faculty member at the U of MN, including substantial assistance matching, scoping, coordinating, and managing projects. RCP staff with knowledge of the broad range of academic departments and resources at the University and with expertise in community resiliency, project management, and communications will provide ongoing support to ensure high-quality outcomes that meet your organization’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 as needed, maintaining a Basecamp project management system, coordinating communications and media outreach about the partnership, planning and staffing community events, reimbursing project-related travel and material costs to support student 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 student work will be licensed through a Creative Commons agreement that allows our partners to reproduce, distribute, or adapt the work for other 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 also depend on a **local financial contribution** from our partners to support program staffing and operations. Partners 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, businesses, and chambers of commerce. Regardless of where these funds are obtained from, **the partner community is responsible for acting as the sole fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making one lump-sum payment to RCP for all projects that are successfully matched.**

The base price for participation in the program for the 2019–2020 academic year is **$5,000 per project**, with a guarantee that 1–2 University of Minnesota courses or independent student teams...
will be matched with each project. Additional courses or assistance may incur additional costs (pending your organization’s pre-approval of such expenditures).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Submitting Your Application

You can submit your proposal online at https://z.umn.edu/apply-small-rcp or email it as a single PDF file to rcp@umn.edu. Proposals are accepted at any time throughout the year.

RCP staff are available to help with development of your application 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 us at rcp@umn.edu for assistance or with questions.

Required Application Components

1. Partner Information: Provide (a) the name of your organization 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 organization employs. For partners located more than two hours from the U of MN Twin Cities campuses, describe any special arrangements to address issues of collaboration and coordination at a distance (for example, access to videoconferencing or other technological resources).

2. Proposed Project(s): Provide individual descriptions of up to 5 projects. Projects should address high-priority issues for your organization or the community, and involve research questions or technical assistance needs that are appropriate for graduate-level student work.
   For each project, 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. 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 important at this time? What are your organization’s ultimate goals/objectives related to the project or the larger issues the project addresses? How will the student work be used by your organization or community?
   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. Community partners or stakeholders (external to your organization) that will be invited to 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.
Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to contact RCP during preparation of their application to discuss proposed projects and ensure they are within the capacity of RCP and the U of MN, and appropriate for student work. For a list of projects proposed by previous partners, visit rcp.umn.edu (under the “Communities” menu). *Note that these project lists are not exhaustive, and other issues and topic areas not represented here are certainly feasible.*

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 funding entities.

### Application Evaluation Criteria

RCP will evaluate your application 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 Resiliency Focus:** Projects clearly build upon and advance the partner’s overall resiliency efforts, and include specific resiliency-related goals—for example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering active living, 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 resiliency.

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 support for local resiliency 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. *RCP works hard to match projects; however, we cannot guarantee matches.*

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.