RCP Annual Request for Proposals
Application Information for the 2020–2021 Academic Year

The University of Minnesota’s Resilient Communities Project (RCP, rcp.umn.edu) is now accepting proposals from cities, counties, tribal public entities, special districts (e.g., watershed, transit, park, school), and regional government agencies or collaboratives for partnerships for the 2020–2021 academic year.

RCP Partnerships are intended for Minnesota local government agencies interested in collaborating with the University of Minnesota on anywhere from one to twenty (1–20) individual projects. Projects should demonstrably advance community resilience to economic, social, environmental, or technological changes, and may include projects related to the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Partners will benefit from applied research and technical assistance provided by University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff, from a variety of departments and disciplines. The selection process is competitive, and the partner must support the effort through dedicated staff time and a local financial contribution of $6,000 per project.

Deadline for Proposals: Proposals are accepted three times per year, with deadlines as follows:

- June 15 for work to begin fall-semester academic term (September to December 2020)
- October 1 for work to begin spring-semester academic term (January to May 2021)
- February 1 for work to begin summer academic term (May to August 2021)

Proposals must be submitted 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 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 resilience (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 your agency (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 during the 2020–2021 academic year (September 2020 to August 2021). The collaboration will begin with a series of planning and orientation meetings, with U of MN students, faculty, and staff actively working on projects beginning in fall (September), spring (January), or summer (June) 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 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.
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.

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 local financial contribution for selected communities for the 2020–2021 academic year (ending August 31, 2021) is $6,000 per project. This guarantees that each project will be matched with up to two (2) University of Minnesota courses or independent student teams. Additional matches or other types of assistance 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 11:59 PM on the following dates:

- June 15 for work to begin fall-semester academic term (September to December 2020)
- October 1 for work to begin spring-semester academic term (January to May 2021)
- February 1 for work to begin summer academic term (May to August 2021)

Communities selected for participation in RCP will be notified within two weeks.

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. 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 one to twenty (1–20) projects. Projects should address high-priority issues for your agency or the community, and involve research questions or technical assistance needs appropriate for graduate-level student work. Projects should demonstrably advance community resilience to economic, social, technological, or environmental changes, and may include changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 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. **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** (external to your agency) 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 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 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.), or relevant department heads. You may also wish to include demonstrations of support from proposed partner organizations or agencies, and/or proposed 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 Resilience Focus:** Projects clearly build upon and advance the partner’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:** Where appropriate, projects include a commitment to meaningfully engage residents and other stakeholders throughout the partnership as a means of integrating local knowledge, and strengthening and broadening support for local 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. *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.