The University of Minnesota’s Resilient Communities Project (RCP, rcp.umn.edu) is now accepting proposals from cities, counties, tribal governments, special districts, and regional government agencies or collaboratives for Large-Scale RCP Partnerships for the academic year beginning fall 2020. Successful applicants will benefit from approximately 20,000 to 50,000 hours of work by University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff, from a variety of disciplines, to provide research and technical assistance with 10–25 projects that advance community resiliency. The partner must support the effort through dedicated staff time and a local financial contribution. The selection process is competitive.

The deadline for proposals is Monday, March 16, 2020. Selected partner(s) will be announced in March 2020.
OVERVIEW OF RCP

The Resilient Communities Project is a highly successful program at the University of Minnesota that connects local government agencies with U of MN faculty and students to advance community resilience, sustainability, and livability through collaborative, course-based projects.

There are two ways to partner with RCP. **Small-Scale Partnerships** are intended for communities seeking to collaborate on a small number of (1–5) projects. For information about how to apply for a Small-Scale partnership, visit [http://z.umn.edu/ApplyRCP](http://z.umn.edu/ApplyRCP).

**Large-Scale Partnerships** involve a 15- to 18-month collaboration between the University of Minnesota and a local government partner in Minnesota that engages students and faculty from across the university to work on 10–25 projects. RCP has completed Large-Scale Partnerships with Minnetonka, North St. Paul, Rosemount, Carver County, Brooklyn Park, Ramsey, Scott County, and Ramsey County.

Students and faculty address the partner’s research and technical assistance needs through course-based student projects, providing 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—from architecture, planning, and engineering to environmental sciences, business, public health, and the humanities (for a list of U of MN departments that RCP has engaged, visit [https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects](https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects)). Most projects involve courses or students from multiple disciplines to better address problems from diverse perspectives. 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, environmental management, public works, engineering, communications, parks and recreation, finance, and more).

For examples of past projects, visit [https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects](https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects).
HOW AN RCP PARTNERSHIP WORKS

RCP will select one or more partners for a Large-Scale Partnership for the 2020–2021 academic year (September 2020 to August 2021). Staff from RCP and the selected partner will begin work on the 15- to 18-month collaboration with a series of planning and orientation workshops beginning in spring 2020. The partnership will continue through the academic year, starting with the fall 2020 semester when U of MN students and faculty will actively begin work on your projects.

University Commitment

Depending on the partner’s financial contribution, RCP can address 10–25 discrete projects during the partnership year, matching each project with one or more university courses, student teams, or individual students to complete the necessary work. Projects will be carried out during the fall (September–December 2020), spring (January–May 2021), and summer (June–August 2021) academic terms. Work will be completed by graduate, professional, or upper-division undergraduate students, with oversight by faculty instructors and RCP staff.

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. RCP staff with knowledge of the broad range of academic departments and disciplines at the U of MN and with expertise in resiliency and sustainability, project management, and communications will provide ongoing support to ensure high-quality outcomes that meet our partner’s needs. Support 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 partnership website, coordinating communications and media outreach about the partnership, planning and staffing events, documenting partnership activities, soliciting periodic feedback from participants, and troubleshooting projects as needed.

Outcomes from each university course will be transmitted through a final report and/or presentation at the conclusion of the semester.

RCP Timeline

- **March 2020**: RCP partner for 2020–2021 announced
- **March–May 2020**: RCP and partner negotiate contract; partner staff introduced to RCP program, meet with RCP staff to clarify and refine purpose and goals of individual projects
- **Summer 2020**: RCP begins matching projects with U of MN courses; RCP and partner staff meet with faculty to develop scopes-of-work for each project–course match; partner staff provide background information and data for projects; project lead orientation workshop
- **Fall 2020**: Partnership kick-off event; full-term classes work on RCP projects (September–December); final scoping of spring-term courses (October–December).
- **Spring 2021**: Spring-term classes work on RCP projects (January–May); fall-term student reports delivered to partner; final scoping for summer-term projects (April–May).
- **May 2021**: RCP End-of-Year Celebration on the U of MN campus.
- **Summer 2021**: Summer graduate research assistants continue work on selected projects (June–August); spring-term student reports delivered to partner; RCP facilitates optional implementation workshop to identify priorities and next steps for the partner’s efforts to advance community resiliency.
**Partner Commitment**

A key element of a successful RCP partnership is commitment and involvement from partner staff. Our 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.

**Program Coordinator**

As part of its proposal, the partner will also be expected to identify a senior staff person who will be the **RCP program coordinator** for the partnership, serving as a liaison between the partner and RCP, and working directly with RCP 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 on the number of projects and their personal level of involvement with each project. In general, they should **expect to spend an average of 15–20 hours per week for 15–18 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-organization partner, each participating organization may be asked to designate a program coordinator responsible for all projects involving that co-partner, though the time commitment is likely to be much less than for a single coordinator.)

**Project Leads**

For each project that is successfully matched with one or more U of MN courses, the partner will be expected to identify a **project lead**—one staff member who will be the primary point of contact for students and faculty working on that project. Project leads are responsible for participating in project scoping; preparing background materials (existing data, reports, plans, etc.) for students; 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 project meetings with RCP students, faculty, and staff; 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; 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 a given project, **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 in process. To ensure sufficient time to devote to participation in RCP, no staff member should be project lead on more than 1–2 projects.

During spring and summer 2020, all partner staff serving as project leads will be expected to attend a half-day orientation workshop, participate in project refinement and scoping meetings with RCP staff and faculty from the U of MN, and provide background materials for projects for which they are responsible (this might include reports and memos, community datasets, GIS maps and data layers, aerial photographs, concept plans, computer-aided drawings, etc.).

Financial Cost of the Program

RCP provides a high level of access to University of Minnesota faculty and students, as well as substantial assistance matching, scoping, coordinating, and managing projects. RCP staff identify and facilitate one-to-one connections between partner staff and university faculty and students from a variety of disciplines to develop meaningful projects that respond directly to local needs. RCP provides program management and project coordination staff support; reimbursement of project-related travel and material costs to support student participation in the program; student and faculty site visits and community field work; 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 public display; regular publicity through social, print, and audiovisual media; and digital archiving of student work products and presentations. The total cost to the University of Minnesota to deliver these items is $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 partners. The cost of a Large-Scale RCP Partnership for the 2020–2021 academic year is $50,000 (base fee) plus $4,000 for each project successfully matched with one or more courses, student teams, or individual students.

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, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and chambers of commerce. Regardless of where these funds are obtained from, the selected partner is responsible for acting as the sole fiscal agent for the partnership, and for making two lump-sum payments to RCP, one in fall 2020, and a second in spring 2021.
APPLICATION PROCESS

RCP is available to help with development of your proposal at any stage—from introducing the program to staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders to brainstorming ideas for projects.

Identifying Potential Projects

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact RCP during preparation of their proposal to discuss proposed projects. Successful development of a project list is best accomplished through dialogue:

- the partner proposes a preliminary list of projects
- RCP staff and partner staff meet to discuss modifications to proposed projects to better match project scope and scale with availability and interest of U of MN courses and faculty
- RCP suggests additional projects, based on the university’s capacity and the partner’s interests, that could meet the partner’s goals

This dialogue is critical to generating project lists that both meet the partner’s needs and match the capacity of RCP and the U of MN.

Projects may be drawn from individual departments in your agency (e.g., public works, community development, administration, public safety, health and community services, environmental management, parks and recreation) or be pursued through cross-departmental collaborations.

In formulating projects, we encourage applicants to actively consult and collaborate with other entities, such as neighboring cities, county or state agencies, watershed districts, transit providers, school districts, nonprofit organizations, local businesses, professional or business organizations, and research or educational institutions. These entities may serve as direct project participants, be active stakeholders in a project, contribute their own projects, and/or provide funding to support the partner’s participation in the RCP program.

For ideas about how to select projects for a Resilient Communities Project partnership, visit our website at https://rcp.umn.edu/content/selecting-projects.

Application Timeline

- July 2019–February 2020: RCP staff are available for informational presentations about the program to your staff, elected officials, or potential partner organizations. RCP will also host one or more information sessions and/or webinars for those interested in learning more about the program (visit https://z.umn.edu/applyrcp for date, time, and location of information sessions).
- August 2019 to February 2020: RCP staff are available for in-person meetings to discuss project ideas. We strongly encourage communities to contact Mike Greco, RCP director (mgreco@umn.edu), for assistance and input as you develop your project list.
- March 16, 2020: Proposals are due as a single PDF file emailed to rcp@umn.edu by 11:59 PM CST.
Proposal Components

Proposals should clearly demonstrate your organization’s interest in, broad support for, and financial and staff capacity to administer a 15- to 18-month partnership with RCP. There is no minimum or maximum page length. For full consideration, your proposal must include all of the following:

1. Partner Information:
   - The name of your organization or community
   - Current population and number of households in the geographic area you service or represent
   - Annual budget
   - The total number of staff your organization employs
   - The name and contact information (title, department, email, phone, U.S. mail address) of the person who would serve as your RCP program coordinator (see p. 3) and who will be the primary contact for your proposal going forward.

2. Resiliency Statement:
   - Provide a statement that demonstrates your organization’s or community’s interest in and commitment to furthering resiliency, which RCP defines as the capacity of communities, institutions, individuals, and natural systems to adapt and thrive in the face of environmental, social, and economic changes, stresses, and shocks.
   - The statement should explain how your organization or community defines and operationalizes resiliency, and how a partnership with RCP will both build upon and advance these efforts.
   - If you have a resiliency action plan, strategic plan, or other adopted document that demonstrates this commitment, you may want to reference the document in your proposal 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 partner’s capacity to:
   - manage the number of discrete projects proposed for the partnership
   - actively collaborate with students and faculty at the U of MN Twin Cities and coordinate campuses throughout the 15–18 month partnership
   - effectively engage community partners or stakeholders where appropriate
   - provide regular updates to elected officials, senior staff, appointed commissions, residents, and others not directly involved in projects
   - administer the overall partnership with the university.

For partners more than two hours from Minneapolis–St. Paul (where RCP is based), describe any special arrangements for or previous experience with collaborating and coordinating at a distance, including access to videoconferencing or other technological resources.

4. Proposed Projects: Provide individual descriptions of at least 10 and no more than 30 proposed projects. You may wish to propose more projects than you anticipate actually undertaking since not all projects will be suitable for matching with university courses. Projects should address
high-priority issues and involve research questions or technical assistance needs that are appropriate for graduate-level student work. For each project, provide the following information:

- **Project name/title.** Should be descriptive of the project, but can be creative.
- **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 throughout the partnership.
- **A one- to two-paragraph description of the project.** What is the context for the project? Why is this project important at this time? What are the ultimate goals/objectives related to the project or the larger issues the project addresses? What is the purpose of the work students would do?
- **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? How will student research or technical assistance advance local efforts?
- **Existing plans, reports, data, or other background information** relevant to the project. If these are available online, include a URL.
- **Community partners or stakeholders** that will be invited to participate in the project. Describe specifically how these individuals or organizations will be involved, and how their participation will benefit the project.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to meet with RCP staff during preparation of their proposals to discuss their proposed projects (see p. 5, “Identifying Potential Projects”).

5. **Public Involvement:** Meaningfully engaging residents and other stakeholders is critical to the success of local resiliency-building efforts. How will the public and stakeholders be involved in the RCP partnership? How will this build on existing engagement efforts?

6. **Next Steps:** Describe your strategy for identifying “next steps” for individual projects at the conclusion of the RCP partnership. How will all of the information produced from the partnership be assimilated and shared with decision makers, stakeholders, and the general public? How will work begun during the partnership be prioritized and carried forward?

7. **Demonstration of Support:** Include letters or other indications of support from one or more of the following: city/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected governing body (city council, county board, etc.), department heads, partner agencies, funding entities.

8. **Local Financial Contribution:** The cost to participate in RCP will range from $90,000–150,000, depending on the number of projects (10–25) successfully matched. We do not ask for a formal commitment of funds at the time of application, but it would be helpful to include a statement that acknowledges the financial contribution required. Regardless of where funds are obtained from, the partner is responsible for acting as the sole fiscal agent for the partnership.

**Submitting Your Proposal**

Proposals are due March 16, 2020, by 11:59 PM CST. Your proposal should be submitted as a single PDF file emailed to rcp@umn.edu.
PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

RCP will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

1. **Top-Level Support and Administrative Capacity:** Senior staff and elected officials show a commitment to participate in the RCP program and to direct staff time and resources to the partnership. Partner demonstrates sufficient staff capacity to engage in a 15- to 18-month partnership across multiple projects, and to successfully carry work forward at the conclusion of 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, enhancing livability, increasing government transparency or accountability, or conserving or restoring environmental resources.

3. **Project Relevance and Impact:** Projects are well formulated and directly relate to the organization’s or community’s stated short-term and long-term strategic goals (ideally as embodied in a strategic plan or similar document). Projects should demonstrate the potential to have a measurable positive impact on community resiliency. A clear relationship to the organization’s or community’s comprehensive or resiliency plans, or to policies, programs, or indicators, is also helpful.

4. **Community Engagement:** Applicant 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 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 will identify faculty who are able and willing to supervise course-based projects based on their curricular and research needs and interests. 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. 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. Your proposal should specifically indicate in what capacity these external partners or collaborators will be involved, and how their participation would enhance the partnership.