

William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

Climate Resilience Planning

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William Penn Foundation
Two Logan Square, Suite 1100
100 North 18th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
williampennfoundation.org



Schuylkill River Development Corporation

Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve environmental conditions for residents of the Philadelphia region. The Foundation’s Environment and Public Space program was created to help improve and protect the natural and built environment in communities around the region. A full description of the program, its goal, and all its objectives can be found on the Foundation’s website. This specific Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

By 2035, support completion and commence implementation of at least 15 community-based climate resilience plans across Greater Philadelphia.

This objective was developed in consultation with many stakeholders around the region.

According to a 2020 UN report, over the last twenty years there has been a sharp increase in major recorded climate-related disaster events¹. In the United States there were 387 confirmed weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion between 1980 and 2024 – and the average annual number of such events has dramatically increased over the past five years². The U.S. Northeast region has averaged about eight separate billion-dollar weather events each year during the last 43 years, and according to the fifth National Climate Change Assessment, has seen a roughly 60% increase in the number of days with extreme precipitation. This has been the largest increase of all U.S. regions.

Recent analyses have raised serious concerns that the models that are currently used for predicting the intensity, duration, and frequency of rainfall have not yet caught up to the changes in our climate. This is especially important because these models are used in the design of infrastructure to protect communities against precipitation impacts. Modeling that takes climate change impacts into account reveals that Philadelphia’s current risk of a 1 in 100-year flood event is actually 245% higher than previously thought, and 400% higher over the next 30 years³. These findings are reflected in the experiences and expectations that we heard from community stakeholders in our listening sessions. This objective is intended to help communities to better prepare for, withstand, and bounce back from the impacts of climate change.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can develop and advance strategies to reduce vulnerability and increase adaptability to the impacts of climate change. Consequently, this RFP imposes few limitations on the approach that applicants may take to address this objective. Proposals may request support for plans and planning processes that address different types of climate impact vulnerability and/or that seek to increase different types of climate impact adaptability. Applicants may request support for various components of the planning process (e.g. outreach and education, community engagement, technical assistance, etc.) and proposals may focus on any geographic areas within Greater Philadelphia, so long as the geographic scope is clearly defined.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will advance the objective above. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 6-7 of this document.

Why is the Foundation using a Request for Proposals to advance this objective?

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals for several reasons. First, we believe that stakeholders across the region have a great deal of expertise and experience that can be supported to make progress on an objective that we heard was important to communities in our region. We want to hear about the impactful projects that are underway or could get underway and need funding. Second, we want to be as transparent as possible about the opportunity for non-profit organizations in the region to secure funding for work to advance this objective. Third, we heard from applicants and grantees in the past that our grant application process was overly burdensome, had unpredictable timelines, and did not provide sufficient information about the funding availability or the criteria used in selecting grantees. Fourth, we heard that applicants wanted an opportunity to show Foundation staff their work, not just tell them about it. The RFP process, including site visits as described below, is part of our effort to address all of this important feedback and to align with the Foundation’s grantmaking values (detailed on our website).

¹ [United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)

² [NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information](#)

³ [First Street Foundation](#)

Background

The Greater Philadelphia region is currently confronting the consequences of climate change, and these consequences are expected to expand and intensify in the coming years. The consequences that pose the most severe direct risks are extreme heat, extreme precipitation events, and rising sea levels that will cause increases in the elevations of the tidal Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers.

The region is expected to see an increase of up to 12 percent in mean annual precipitation by 2050. The average number of days per year with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees could increase from a historical average of 0.3 to as many as 17 by the end of the century. And sea level in the region is expected to rise by up to 45 inches by the 2080s⁴. These impacts will combine to produce a myriad of social, environmental, and public health impacts. Negative impacts include increased heat-related death and disease, increased costs for energy and insurance, and added stress to built and natural infrastructure. These impacts will fall most heavily on communities and neighborhoods that already struggle with the legacy of decades of disinvestment and discrimination.

Thoughtful planning and effective implementation can help communities to reduce their vulnerability and enhance their ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change. There is broad agreement – in the research literature and in lived experience – that resilience is most achievable when communities are actively and authentically engaged in timely planning and decision making. Such participation helps support transparency, knowledge sharing, and trust building, and increases the legitimacy of decisions and decision-making processes. It can also build community capacity and coherence that is, itself, a critical component of community resilience.

900,000+
people in the Philadelphia area live in
places made at least 8 degrees
Fahrenheit hotter by features of the
built environment like dark pavement
and roofs*.

[*Climate Central](#)

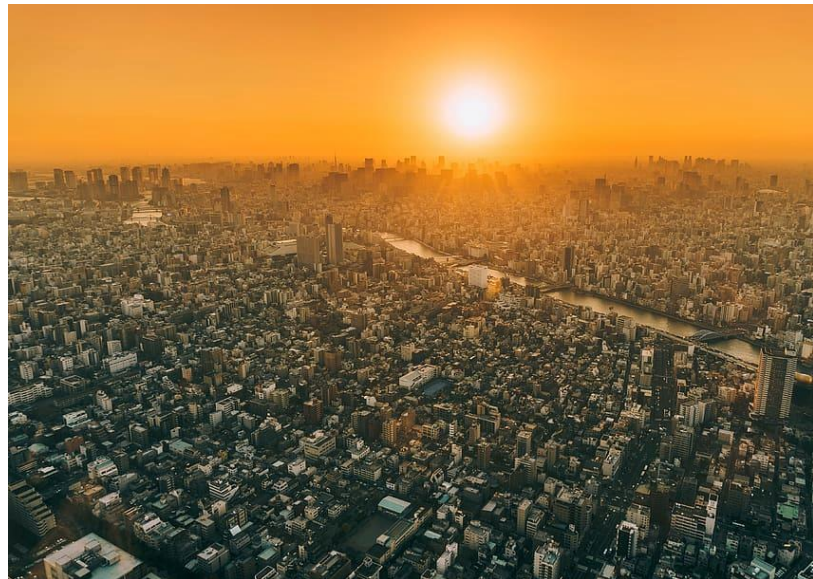


Photo: PXFUEL

⁴ [DVRPC Priority Climate Action Plan](#)

Opportunity Overview

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) would like to support efforts to advance community driven, place-based climate resilience plans. We are prioritizing support for initiating plans and for completion of plans that have already been started. We will not be funding plan implementation now.

Proposed projects must occur in the cities of Philadelphia or Camden. We are especially interested in plans that will primarily serve residents living in census tracts that are designated as overburdened and underserved by the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool⁵.

We are requesting proposals for 1, 2, or 3-year projects. We expect that the appropriate project term will depend on the specific context in which you are working, including the groundwork that may or may not already be in place for the work. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that the work necessary to make significant progress on this objective will be complex, and the most competitive proposals are consequently likely to be those that include robust partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise.

Furthermore, the Foundation recognizes that there are many different tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. All proposals that meet the criteria described below are encouraged.

WPF has \$1 million available to advance this objective at this time. There is no minimum or maximum that organizations may request. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.

Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Public charities include community-based organizations, schools and educational institutions, and other types of public-serving groups. Government entities are also eligible to apply.

Proposed projects must occur in the cities of Philadelphia or Camden.

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⁵ [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the criteria below. Applicants should make every effort to address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Conveys no meaningful connection to any EPS objectives.	Would make an indirect and marginal or uncertain contribution to advancing an EPS objective.	Would make an indirect but important contribution to advancing EPS objective.	Would make a direct contribution to advancing EPS objective.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	
Beneficiaries			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not identify expected beneficiaries of the project.	Identified beneficiaries of the project do not include prioritized communities.	Identifies prioritized beneficiaries but without precision.	Precisely identifies prioritized community/communities that are expected to benefit from the project.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	
Meaningful Community Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No meaningful engagement of intended beneficiaries.	Cursory engagement of intended beneficiaries.	Meaningful engagement of intended beneficiaries in development of proposal or implementation of project.	Meaningful engagement of intended beneficiaries in development of proposal and implementation of project.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	
Partnership and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not address partnerships that will be necessary for success.	Identified relevant partners but has not adequately incorporated collaboration with those partners into the proposal.	Identifies relevant partners and describes collaboration with those partners.	Identifies relevant partners and provides evidence of partners' commitment to fulfilling the roles described.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	
Scientific and Technical Awareness			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No apparent awareness of relevant scientific and technical aspects of the project.	Limited awareness of some of the relevant scientific and technical aspects of the project.	Developing awareness of relevant scientific and technical aspects of the project.	Detailed awareness of relevant scientific and technical aspects of the project.
			← Strong Required →

Sustainability and Maintenance			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not address maintenance and sustainability of the proposed project.	Partially address maintenance or sustainability but not both.	Partially address maintenance and sustainability of the proposed project.	Fully address maintenance and sustainability of the proposed project.
Strategic Clarity			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Imprecise definition of success and unclear strategy for achieving objectives.	Clear definition of success, but unclear or questionable strategy for achieving objectives.	Precise definition of success and clear strategy for achieving objectives but does not address expected consequences for intended beneficiaries.	Precise definition of success, persuasive strategy for achieving objectives, and clear expectations of intended consequences of project for beneficiaries.
Gentrification			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not address gentrification risks of proposed project.	Acknowledges gentrification risks but includes no strategy for mitigating or minimizing them.	Acknowledges gentrification risks and has a limited strategy for mitigating or minimizing them.	Includes strategy to minimize and mitigate gentrification risks.

Additional expectations and considerations:

Organizational Capacity	It is expected that applicants will provide evidence of possessing the organizational capacity necessary to successfully complete the proposed project.
Budget	It is expected that applicants will include a project budget that is reasonable for the proposed activities and stated results.
Advance Other Objectives	Projects that strongly advance this objective and also contribute to other WPF objectives will be given additional consideration.

Learning and Evaluation

Grantees will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the year.

In addition, organizations funded as a result of this RFP will be convened in a Learning Community to build networks among those advancing a common objective, to share learning and best practices, and to identify ways in which progress could be enhanced. Grantees will help to determine the frequency, content, and specific goals of the Learning Community. The overhead funding included with any awarded grants is, in part, meant to help subsidize staff participation in the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an informational webinar on **Monday, July 8, 2024 at 12:00PM ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/williampenfoundation>.

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding and should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of a participating organization's operating budget.

In rare cases, it is possible that *everything* an organization does is focused on advancing the specific objective stated above. If that is the case, an organization may be eligible for general operating, rather than project support. If you believe that to be the case, please contact the Program Officer named below to discuss further.

The Application Process

The application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by 5:00PM EST on **August 1, 2024**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Selected applicants will take part in a site visit with WPF staff so that the Foundation can learn more about applicants' work. Site visits will be approximately two hours in duration. We ask that organizations use this time to introduce key staff working on the proposed project, to show WPF staff where the work will take place, and to elevate the voices of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed project. Based on a combination of the written materials and the learning from the site visit, **a final slate of organizations** will be recommended to the WPF Board for consideration of their proposals.

This request or any subsequent response does not commit William Penn Foundation or the responding organization to any future funding or engagement. If you have any questions, contact Stuart Clarke at sclarke@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

July 1, 2024

Proposal submission period opens

July 8, 2024

Informational Webinar (see previous page)

August 1, 2024

Proposals due by 5:00PM EST

August 16, 2024

Select applicants notified that their proposals have been chosen for further consideration and a site visit. Other applicants will be notified that their proposals are not advancing in the process.

August 19– September 6, 2024

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

October 25, 2024

WPF Board review selected proposals

November 2024

Project implementation can begin