

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

**Responsive,
Accountable Local
Government in
Philadelphia**

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Due August 1, 2024

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Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve quality of life for residents of the Philadelphia region. The Foundation’s Democracy and Civic Initiatives program was created to support collective and collaborative action toward a more engaged, participatory city and state. A full description of the Democracy and Civic Initiatives program, its goal, and all of 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:

Philadelphians have confidence that city government is responsive to their needs and accountable to constituent priorities.

Stakeholders throughout the city have shared that members of their communities are more motivated to participate in democracy when they see that participation leads to tangible, positive change in their lives.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to advancing this objective. With that understanding, there are few limitations on the project designs or applicants’ approach to addressing this issue. For example, proposals may focus on service delivery, policy or system change, outreach and

education, media and information, or other ways to advance the objective. Proposals may have a neighborhood focus or may seek to make change on a citywide scale.

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 page 6-7 of this document.

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

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals process 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 (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks project proposals that will advance this objective and make tangible improvements in the quality of life for residents of Philadelphia.

Background

Through the Democracy and Civic Initiatives program, WPF seeks to build trust and participation, particularly among underrepresented communities, in Pennsylvania’s democratic processes. The process of governing requires continual, ongoing choices about what actions to take, how to allocate resources, and what best serves the public interest. But there is not always a clear mechanism for residents to convey their needs and priorities to the decisionmakers in government.

The ability to engage with government is particularly important on the local level, which is charged with delivering essential everyday services. In early 2023, a citywide poll found that 65% of Philadelphians believed the city to be on the wrong track¹. In order to change perceptions, and experiences, for the better, we need people inside and outside of city government to improve how Philadelphians interact with and experience local government. When people know how decisions are made and see that they have the ability to impact how their communities are governed, they are more likely to engage with democratic processes and to take action to make their neighborhoods stronger, healthier, and better connected. We plan to measure progress on this objective through a recurring survey to understand change over time. We are currently exploring opportunities to align this survey measure with other citywide surveys, such as Pew Charitable Trusts’ *State of the City* or Lenfest Institute’s *Every Voice, Every Vote*.

51% of Philadelphians name city services as a top priority for the administration.

A 2023 poll surveying more than 1,200 people about the quality of life in Philadelphia found that over half of Philadelphia residents, including nearly two-thirds of Latino residents, named this issue as a top priority.¹

¹ *What Philly Wants: The Every Voice, Every Vote Survey of Philadelphia Voters, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, 2023*



Opportunity Overview

WPF seeks to support efforts that will increase confidence in the responsiveness and accountability of city government. We are most interested in prioritizing projects that will positively impact communities that have historically been underrepresented, including people of color, immigrants, people living in poverty, members of disability communities, and others who lack access.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many different approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. As examples, this could include projects to empower residents with the knowledge and skills to advocate for their neighborhoods, projects to enable city agencies to better engage residents and business owners in setting policy and making decisions, or projects to increase transparency and public awareness. All proposals that meet the review criteria described below are encouraged. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

In this round of funding, we hope to learn more about the ways organizations across the city are seeking to make change and measure their progress. Given that this is new work for the Foundation, we are requesting proposals for projects ranging from 15 -18 months. We anticipate the next RFP to advance this objective will open in late 2025. Proposals may be for projects at any stage of development, from emerging work to efforts that are already underway.

WPF has allocated \$1.5 million to advance this objective at this time. There is no minimum or maximum that organizations may request, but the most competitive proposals will likely be those with requests of \$250,000 or less.

At least one third of the total amount awarded under this RFP will be reserved for grants to organizations that have budgets under \$1 million per year and/or are led by individuals who are members of groups with a history of discrimination or exclusion. WPF values diverse approaches from various types of organizations to address the 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. Applicants must have strong ties within Philadelphia and a history of successful work in the city.

Proposed projects must occur in Philadelphia.

Organizations with a current WPF grant that is funding work related to this RFP are not eligible to apply for more funding for the same project(s).

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
Project activities and goals are unrelated to the defined objective.	Project activities and goals may advance the defined objective, but connection is vague.	Project will make a clear but indirect contribution to advancing the defined objective.	Project will make a clear and direct contribution to advancing the defined objective.
Equity and Inclusion			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No plan to prioritize underrepresented communities. No apparent community engagement.	Limited efforts to prioritize underrepresented communities. Sporadic or cursory engagement of relevant community members.	Project prioritizes access and creates opportunities for underrepresented communities. Meaningful engagement of relevant community members in project planning, goal-setting and implementation.	Members of underrepresented communities are leaders in project planning, goal-setting, and implementation.
Organizational Capacity			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No evidence of plan, timeline, resources, staffing, or partnerships necessary to achieve project's goals; no prior relevant experience with proposed work.	Some elements of project plan and resources are in place, but plan to fill gaps is vague or nonexistent.	Project has a realistic plan and timeline; some resources, staffing, and partnerships are in place, with a clear plan to fill remaining gaps.	Evidence of credible, realistic plan, timeline, resources, and staffing to achieve the project's goals; history of successful implementation of similar work.
Collaboration and Partnerships			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No identified partners or plans for collaboration.	Intended partners are identified but there are no clear commitments to collaborate that would strengthen the work.	Some committed partners and a clear plan to build new partnerships that will address gaps in perspective and expertise.	Evidence of commitment to collaborate from partners who will strengthen the work through diverse perspectives and expertise.

Additional expectations:

Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the 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 describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the grant period.

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 15, 2024 at 1:00PM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover 15-18 months of funding and may include up to three months for planning. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of a participating organization's operating budget. In addition, the most competitive inquiries will have total grant requests under \$250,000.

All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, community engagement, staffing, and implementation, are eligible for funding.

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 organizations 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 Program Officer Chelsey Lowe at clowe@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

July 1, 2024

Proposal submission period opens.

July 15, 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.