

William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

Community- Driven Green Space Plans

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Photo: Steve Legato

Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve environmental conditions for residents of Greater Philadelphia. 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 its objectives can be found on the Foundation’s website. This Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective, which was developed in consultation with many stakeholders around the region:

By 2035, establish and begin implementation of at least six community-driven plans to improve and expand green space.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to advancing this objective. With that understanding, this RFP imposes few limitations on the approach that applicants may take. However, projects must focus on the geographies specified below.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should provide 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 7-8 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 this important feedback and to align with the Foundation's grantmaking values (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks project proposals that will support residents of Philadelphia and Camden to establish a shared vision for green space in their neighborhoods through community-driven planning.

Background

Green spaces are assets in urban neighborhoods, providing a multitude of benefits such as reduced air and noise pollution, improved physical and mental health, and reductions in violent crime.¹ While the body of evidence demonstrating the social, economic, and environmental value of green space in cities is substantial, there is also considerable evidence that all urban communities do not have equitable access to the benefits of nature, and that this inequity is driven by the history and legacy of discrimination.²

Initiatives intended to expand and improve green space in neighborhoods that lack these important assets can address this inequity, especially when communities are meaningfully involved in planning and implementation. When investments in green space are made without meaningful community involvement, they can lead to a reduced sense of belonging among long-time residents and an increase in property values, which often results in gentrification and displacement of existing residents and businesses.³ Community-driven planning processes, which value the expertise of community members and center their needs and interests, can help to deliver green space to neighborhoods while avoiding these potential negative outcomes.⁴

In Philadelphia, residents in low-income neighborhoods have 45% less access to park space than those in high-income neighborhoods, and residents in neighborhoods of color have 32% less access than those in white neighborhoods.⁵



¹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sustainable-cities/articles/10.3389/frsc.2022.1037123/full>

² <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-nature-gap/>

³ Jelks NO, Jennings V, Rigolon A. Green Gentrification and Health: A Scoping Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Jan 21;18(3):907. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18030907. PMID: 33494268; PMCID: PMC7908481.

⁴ <https://www.rivernetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Equitable-Development-Toolkit-Green-Gentrification-And-Displacement-09.09.24.pdf>

⁵ [Trust for Public Land, ParkScore Index 2022](#)

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation would like to support efforts that will enable residents of Philadelphia and Camden to develop a shared vision for green space in their neighborhoods and produce implementable plans to realize that vision. We will only consider proposals that primarily or entirely 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 Tool. See screeningtool.geoplatform.gov for designated tracts in our region.

We invite proposals for work that will result in completed community greening plans by the end of the grant term. Applicants may seek to initiate and complete plans using the requested grant funds, or they may use requested grant funds to complete plans that have already been initiated. We will not fund implementation of any plans through this RFP; that opportunity will be provided in a future RFP.

We are requesting proposals for **one- to two-year projects**. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Applicants may request support for all aspects of the planning process, which may include but are not limited to outreach and education, communications, research, partnership-building, technical assistance, and community and stakeholder engagement. Community engagement may include small, early action projects/activities that are explicitly intended to spur community buy-in and/or test ideas that would inform the plan.

As this objective supports community-driven planning, we recognize that neighborhoods may have different priorities for their green space and that there are many tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. Improving and expanding green space should be the primary focus of plans funded through this RFP. We welcome proposals for planning processes that explore greening strategies that enhance the sustainability of improved spaces and/or drive positive economic outcomes for communities. All proposals that meet the criteria described below are encouraged.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise to reach proposed goals.

WPF has **\$2 million** available to advance this objective through this RFP. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the project's contribution to the overall objective. While there is no maximum grant request, requests under \$300,000 will be most competitive.

Eligibility

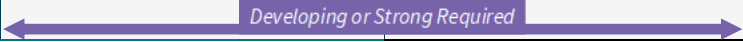
Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Public charities include community-based organizations, schools and educational institutions, and other types of public-serving groups. Government entities are also eligible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

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

Review Criteria

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

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Conveys no meaningful connection to the RFP objective.	Would make a marginal and/or uncertain contribution to advancing the RFP objective.	Proposed work would make a clear contribution to advancing the RFP objective.	Proposed work would make a clear and major contribution to advancing the RFP objective.
Beneficiaries			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not identify expected beneficiaries of the project.	Identified beneficiaries of the project do not include prioritized communities.	Project beneficiaries are identified, include prioritized communities, and will significantly benefit from the proposed work.	Project beneficiaries are identified, include prioritized communities, and will receive significant and major benefits from the proposed work.
Meaningful Community Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No meaningful engagement of community in preparation of proposal or implementation of proposed work.	Limited engagement of community in preparation of proposal or implementation of proposed work.	Meaningful engagement of community in development of proposal or implementation of project.	Robust and sustained engagement of community in preparation of proposal and implementation of proposed work.
Partnership and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not address partnerships that will be necessary for success.	Identified relevant partners but does not describe the role that partners will play in the proposed work.	Identifies relevant partners and fully describes collaboration with those partners.	Identifies relevant partners, fully describes the role that partners will play in the proposed work, and provides evidence of partners' commitment to fulfilling the roles described such as through an included letter of support.
Organizational Capacity			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Insufficient evidence of leadership, resources, staffing, partnerships, and/or experience necessary to achieve project goals.	Evidence of leadership, resources, staffing and/or partnerships, but insufficient evidence of ability to successfully implement work of the type being proposed.	Evidence of leadership, resources, staffing and partnerships, and some experience with successful implementation of the type of work being proposed.	Evidence of all necessary leadership, resources, staffing, and partnerships in place to achieve project goal. Applicant and/or partners also have extensive experience with successful implementation of the type of work being proposed.

Project Design and Feasibility			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not provide a clear, specific, or realistic approach to the work. Project outcomes and success are not clear and well-defined.	Provides a clear approach to the work, but some aspects of the approach are vague or seem unrealistic. Project outcomes are defined, but are of uncertain achievability, based on the details provided.	Provides a clear approach to the work and successful outcomes are defined and achievable. Some aspects of the project design may require further clarification to assess feasibility.	Provides a clear approach to the work that describes the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed project, a feasible plan to implement the work, and a plan to track project outcomes and the impact on the RFP objective.
			

Additional expectations and considerations:

Project Deliverable	Proposed work should produce a completed plan by the end of the grant term.
Feasibility of Implementation	Proposals should demonstrate that planning processes will address the practical and financial requirements necessary to make plan implementation feasible.
Geographic Footprint	Proposals should clearly define the geographic footprint of the project -including listing involved census tracts and identification of tracts designated as overburdened by the Council on Environmental Quality. Applicants should also define the expected impact of the work, e.g. number of residents served.
Budget	The requested budget must be reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results.

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 through 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 optional informational webinar on **Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 11 AM EST.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover **up to two years** of funding.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. Proposals may include funds to provide fair compensation to community stakeholders in exchange for their time and expertise. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

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

Application Process

Before you apply, please review your responses to the four questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to the questions, this funding opportunity may be relevant to you. If you respond “no” to any of the questions, this opportunity is not a good match for your project, and you should not apply.

Is your project:

	YES	NO
Proposing a community-driven planning process that is primarily focused on improving and expanding green space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focused on a clearly defined geographic area in the cities of Philadelphia or Camden?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primarily or entirely serving a geography identified as overburdened and underserved by the Council on Environmental Quality’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to produce a plan that has all the detail necessary to begin implementation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review all of the criteria on pages 7 and 8 and make sure that your program aligns with those.

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wpcf.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by **5:00PM EST on January 31, 2025**. 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.

Timeline

December 9, 2024

Proposal submission period opens.

December 12, 2024

Informational Webinar (see page 9)

January 31, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM EST

February 12-14, 2025

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.

February 17- March 7, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

April 25, 2025

WPF Board review selected proposals.

May 2025

Project implementation can begin.

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 Alison Jones at ajones@williampennfoundation.org.