

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Climate Resilience Planning

Published September 10, 2025

Due October 23, 2025

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



*Flooding after Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020 in Philadelphia's Eastwick neighborhood.
Photo: Philadelphia Fire Department*

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

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. The primary limitation on proposals is that projects must occur in the **cities of Philadelphia, Chester, and/or Camden**. Proposals may focus on specific communities or neighborhoods within these cities or may seek to make change on a citywide scale.

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.

This RFP seeks project proposals that will prepare communities in Greater Philadelphia to withstand, adapt to, and recover quickly from the impacts of climate change.

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 risk of direct impacts are extreme precipitation events, extreme heat, and rising sea levels that will increase the elevations of the tidal Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers.

The region is expected to see an increase of up to 12 percent in average annual precipitation by 2050. On average, the number of days per year with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees could increase from a historical average of less than 1 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 2080s.¹ These impacts will combine to produce a myriad of social, environmental, and public health consequences, including increased heat-related death and disease, increased costs for energy and insurance, and added stress to both built and natural infrastructure. These consequences 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.

In the U.S., every \$1 invested in climate resilience and preparedness saves \$13 in damage, cleanup costs, and economic impact on the local community after a disaster.²



Photo: Eric Sucar, University of Pennsylvania

¹ [DVRPC Priority Climate Action Plan](#)

² [US Chamber of Commerce 2024 Climate Resiliency Report](#)

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support efforts to advance community-driven, place-based planning processes that will enhance the climate resilience of communities in Philadelphia, Chester, and Camden. We will not be funding plan implementation through this RFP – that opportunity will be provided in a future RFP.

We are requesting proposals for projects up to a maximum of two years in duration. 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 climate resilience plans can be produced using a variety of tactics or approaches. Proposals may request support for planning processes that address different types of climate impact vulnerability (e.g., heat, flooding, etc.) and/or that seek to increase different types of climate impact adaptability (e.g. improving built and natural infrastructure; expanding community knowledge; supporting community leadership). Applicants may request support for one or multiple components of the planning process (e.g. outreach and education, community engagement, technical assistance³, etc.).

In describing the proposed work, all submitted proposals should, as applicable:

- define the community that will be served by the planning process and the expected impact, e.g. number of residents served,
- identify the specific climate vulnerabilities that the planning process seeks to address,
- describe the project deliverable that will be completed by the end of the grant term, and
- articulate how and when the proposed work will contribute to the production of an implementable plan.

All proposals that meet the criteria described on pages 7-8 are encouraged.

WPF has **\$1.5 million** available to advance this objective at this time. The maximum amount that organizations may request is \$300,000. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.

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³ For applicants seeking technical support for climate resilience planning projects, the [Registry of Adaptation Practitioners](#) may be a helpful resource. This searchable database of qualified adaptation practitioners can help organizations to easily identify practitioners that provide the services required for a specific project.

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, Chester, or Camden.

Before you apply, please review the 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 proposal:

YES

NO

Occurring in Philadelphia, Chester, or Camden?

☐

☐

Proposing a planning process that will enhance the community’s resilience to the impacts of climate change?

☐

☐

Focused exclusively on planning (i.e., not implementation)?

☐

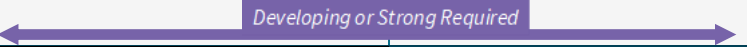
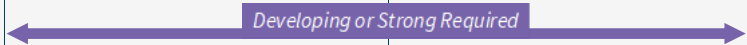
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Please also review all of the criteria on the following pages and make sure that your program aligns with those.

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.
← 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.	Identified beneficiaries of the project include prioritized communities.	Prioritized communities will receive significant benefits from the project.
← Developing or Strong Required →			
Meaningful Community Awareness of Proposed Work			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No meaningful evidence of community awareness of, interest in, or demand for proposed work.	Minimal evidence of community awareness of, interest in, and/or demand for proposed work.	Meaningful evidence of community awareness of, interest in, and/or demand for proposed work.	Specific involvement of community members and/or community-based organizations in development of proposal.
← Developing or Strong Required →			
Meaningful Community Engagement in Proposed Work			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No meaningful community engagement included in implementation plan for proposed work.	Limited community engagement in implementation plan for proposed work.	Significant community engagement as audience for proposed work (e.g. outreach and education).	Substantial community engagement as both audience for and also implementers of proposed work.
← Developing or Strong Required →			
Partnership and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Does not address partnerships that will be necessary for success.	Explains the partnerships that will be necessary for success, but does not identify specific partners or describe the role that partners will play in the proposed work.	Identifies specific partners, provides at least a general description of the role that they will play in the work, and includes letters of support from at least some of them.	Identifies specific partners, provides a detailed description of the role that they will play in the work, and includes letters of support from each of them.
← Developing or Strong Required →			

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, successful outcomes are defined and achievable, and the proposal includes a sound project design and feasible implementation plan.
			

Additional expectations and considerations:

Historically Disinvested Populations	Proposals that primarily serve historically disinvested populations, including communities of color and low-income communities, will likely be most competitive.
Coordination with Relevant Efforts	Proposals that demonstrate awareness of and intention to coordinate with other relevant planning processes will likely be most competitive.
Feasibility of Implementation	Proposals should demonstrate that the planning process will address the practical and financial requirements necessary to develop an implementable plan.
Project Deliverable	In most cases, proposed projects should result in an implementable climate resilience plan by the end of the grant term that will be made available to community members, partners, and other stakeholders. Projects that will not result in a complete, implementable plan by the end of the grant term should describe the anticipated pathway and timeline for developing a complete plan and articulate how the proposed work contributes to achieving that goal.
Budget	The requested budget must be reasonable for the proposed activities and stated results.

Learning and Insights

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 **Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 3:00 PM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to two 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.

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

All aspects of project development and execution that contribute to a climate resilience plan, including planning, design, community engagement, staffing, stipends, and materials/supplies, are eligible for funding. Proposals may include funds to provide fair compensation to community stakeholders in exchange for their time and expertise. Plan implementation and capital expenses are not eligible for funding.

Application Process

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions in the eligibility section above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>.

Submit your application by **5:00PM ET on October 23, 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 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 Alison Jones at ajones@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

September 10, 2025

Proposal submission period opens.

September 17, 2025

Informational Webinar (see page 9)

October 23, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

November 7-10, 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.

November 10-December 10, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

February 6, 2026

WPF Board reviews selected proposals.

February 9, 2026

Project implementation can begin.