

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Increasing Green Stormwater Infrastructure

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Photo credit: Philadelphia Water 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, increase by 600 acres the amount of green stormwater infrastructure installed.

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. One significant limitation is that projects must take place in and primarily serve residents in the city of Philadelphia or city of Camden.

Proposals may focus on capital improvements, outreach and education, training and technical assistance, policy advocacy, system change or other ways to advance the objective. Proposals may focus on a community or neighborhood, or they 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.

All proposals should feature stormwater management using vegetated systems. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 8-9 of this document.

This RFP seeks projects to advance stormwater management solutions that feature vegetation and infiltration to capture stormwater and provide social, environmental, and economic benefits.

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.

Background

Vegetated green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is a proven stormwater management solution for communities vulnerable to climate-related stresses tied to rising temperatures and severe flood risks. GSI also supports community greening and cooling, reduces flood risk, and improves water quality through the installation of trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and a variety of basins, wetlands, and other landscape features that capture and manage rainfall and runoff on site. By emphasizing vegetation and natural processes, these highly engineered solutions also create new green spaces that provide habitat, sustain wildlife, and support natural ecosystems.¹

Through 2036, the city of Philadelphia is obligated to spend more than \$1 billion on additional stormwater infrastructure improvement to reduce combined sewer overflows as part of its responsibilities under the U.S. Clean Water Act.² The blueprint for this work is Philadelphia's *Green City Clean Waters* plan, which is held up as a national model of urban water management for its incorporation of green infrastructure. Across the Delaware River, the Camden SMART (Stormwater Management and Resource Training) Initiative is investing in a comprehensive network of green infrastructure programs and projects for the city of Camden.³ Both public investments rely on revenue from residents' water and sewer bills.

Despite the visionary promise of these plans and regulatory commitments, the "green" aspects of green stormwater infrastructure are sometimes compromised. When GSI is incorporated as a part of regulatory requirements, obligations are sometimes seen as the maximum amount of stormwater management that should be incorporated rather than the minimum. In other cases, fully voluntary green stormwater infrastructure may lack systems to ensure long-term maintenance of vegetated systems. Challenges with plant care, landscaping, and irrigation present significant hurdles.⁴ High impact natural landscapes and community-driven projects in urban environments require complex stakeholder coordination and expenses that are difficult to incorporate with only public investment. Vegetation is too often eliminated from projects to save money, leaving stormwater management to the hidden, below-ground decentralized "gray" drainage features like cisterns and underground storage reservoirs. These conditions reduce the overall potential for stormwater infrastructure to deliver additional community benefits while addressing water management.

There is a great opportunity to amplify community and non-profit organization expertise and dedication to green stormwater infrastructure while leveraging Philadelphia and Camden's ambitious stormwater plans and public investments. Collectively, we seek to maximize additional community greening and climate resilience benefits while also addressing flood control and water management for communities most in need.

¹ [Resources - GSI Impact Hub](#)

² [Green City Clean Waters – Philadelphia Water Department](#)

³ [Green Infrastructure and Camden SMART - The Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority](#)

⁴ [Opportunities to Expand Green Stormwater In Philadelphia | TNC](#)



Photo credit: Philadelphia Water Department

Between 2011 and 2019, GSI investments added 1,200 jobs in Philadelphia - a 13.3% surge in just eight years. By 2021, the industry supported more than 10,300 workers across the metro area. Many of these positions are entry-level and accessible to young people entering the workforce and provide family-supporting wages.⁵

A single acre of constructed stormwater wetland delivers far more than cleaner water and flood relief — it has been shown to generate \$8,150 in recreational value and \$5,850 in habitat value, turning green infrastructure into a tangible community asset.⁶

⁵ Sustainable Business Network of Philadelphia, 2011. [Green Stormwater Infrastructure \(GSI\) A Tool for Economic Recovery and Growth in Pennsylvania](#)

⁶ The Nature Conservancy. [Gsiimpacthub.org, GSI Impact Calculator: Methods & Data Sources.](#)

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support efforts that will advance stormwater management solutions that feature vegetation, infiltration, and landscape treatments for water management in addition to their other social, environmental, and economic benefits.

We are requesting proposals for **one- to three-year projects**. WPF values diverse approaches from various organizations and communities to address the objective. We aim to attract and expect to fund a range of project types, recognizing that there are many different tactics that could be used to advance the objective stated above. We seek to support new and innovative ways to maximize benefits from GSI investments and to support efforts that increase the scale of established successful local efforts. In all cases, the proposed projects must make a clear contribution to advancing the objective stated on page 2.

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.

WPF has \$3.5 million available to advance this objective through this RFP. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that organizations may request. However, **grant requests under \$1 million will be most competitive**. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.

Understanding that organizational capacity is critical to success, overhead funds will be added to portions of the project budgets, based on a formula described in the “How to Apply” section of our website.

After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations. All proposals that meet the review criteria described below are encouraged.

For applicants requesting funding for capital improvements: WPF works with [Green Building United](#) to provide optional, free, hands-on technical assistance (TA) to grantees to ensure that sustainability and climate resilience are factored into capital projects funded by WPF. Free TA is available to grantees in the planning, design, or early construction phases of their projects. TA can help organizations reduce operational costs, including energy costs; prepare for extreme weather; access financial incentives; and meet other sustainability goals. To date, support has included one-on-one discussions, design reviews with relevant professionals, and facilitated site visits to peer organizations who have addressed similar sustainability/resilience challenges. Organizations that are selected to advance beyond the written proposal stage of the review process will have the opportunity to learn more about free TA from Green Building United during their site visit with WPF staff.

Examples of capital projects include vegetated bioretention and infiltration practices, landscape scale stormwater wetlands, and other naturalized practices that advance the RFP objective stated on page 2.

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 and/or seek to serve residents and communities of the **city of Philadelphia** or **city of 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.

	YES	NO
Is the applying organization a 501(c)3 public charity OR operating under a public charity fiduciary OR a government entity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your project contribute to new acres of vegetated Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Philadelphia or Camden?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review all of the criteria below 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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

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.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	
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.
		← Developing or Strong Required →	

Additional expectations:

Stormwater Management Estimate (acres)	The most competitive proposals should include a scientific or engineering-based estimate of the project's contribution to new green stormwater infrastructure, measured by the acreage of drainage for which stormwater runoff is expected to be managed at a 1-inch depth.
Exceeding Regulatory Requirements	Proposals that go beyond regulatory requirements to feature more intensive use of vegetated features or capture additional drainage area will be most competitive.
Budget	The requested budget must be reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results. Projects that demonstrate a diversity of funding sources are also likely to be more competitive
Inclusion of New Constituencies	Partnerships that introduce new constituencies that are impacted by green stormwater infrastructure but have had less voice in this work will likely be more competitive.
Advancing Other Objectives	Projects that strongly advance this objective and also contribute to other WPF objectives will be more competitive.
Advancing WPF values	Proposals that strongly align with WPF grantmaking values and priorities stated on our website will be most competitive.

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 **Tuesday, June 23, 2026 at 11:00 AM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding. 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. All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, travel, community engagement, staffing, and implementation, are eligible for funding.

Please do not include indirect costs to the applicant organization. Overhead will be calculated automatically by the Foundation based on your final project budget and will be awarded in addition to your requested budget. We award between 15 and 25% based on your organization size. Please note that sub-awards to consultants and partners should include indirect costs in your grant request budget as they will not be included in the overhead calculation. For more information on formulas used to calculate overhead, please refer to the “How to Apply” section of our website.

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

Proposals that Include Advocacy and Lobbying

The Foundation recognizes that advocacy can sometimes be a useful tactic to advance certain objectives. Advocacy takes many forms and sometimes includes activities that the Internal Revenue Service defines as lobbying. (See [Application Guidelines for Advocacy Projects](#) for general information on the IRS lobbying rules.) The Foundation is open to proposals that include advocacy and/or lobbying as part of the project and may fund projects that include lobbying so long as certain requirements are met.

Applications that include advocacy or lobbying must:

1. Show in the budget submitted by the applicant that the amount requested from the Foundation is less than 80% of the total project budget.
2. Identify the proportion of the total project budget, if any, that may support activities defined as lobbying under the IRS rules (the “lobbying percentage”). (You will see a specific question about this on the budget template.)
3. Show that the applicant has funding commitments that will cover a minimum of 20% of the total project budget for at least the first year of the proposed grant period. In-kind contributions cannot be counted toward this portion of the budget. (Organizations will be expected to demonstrate funding commitments for at least 20% of the budget for all years of the grant period, but we recognize that it may take additional time to secure those commitments.)
4. If the lobbying percentage is more than 20% of the project budget, the applicant must show that they have committed funds that exceed that lobbying percentage.

In no cases can WPF earmark funds for lobbying activities, nor can Foundation funds be used to support or oppose any candidate for public office, for voter registration efforts, or for any partisan purposes

Application Process

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

Please be sure to review the Application and Additional Guidelines section of our website, under How to Apply.

Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **July 30, 2026**. The 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 Maggie Rwakazina at mrwakazina@williampennfoundation.org or Nathan Boon at nboon@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

June 17, 2026

Proposal submission period opens.

June 23, 2026

Informational Webinar (see page 10).

July 30, 2026

Proposals due by 5:00 PM ET.

August 12-17, 2026

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 17-September 14, 2026

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

October 23, 2026

WPF Board review selected proposals.

November 2026

Project implementation can begin.