

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Climate Resilience Planning

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Children cooling off on a hot day/Juliet Shen, courtesy of the City of Philadelphia

Purpose of this Request for Proposals

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 Environment and Public Space program seeks to improve and protect the natural and built environment in these communities. A full description of the Environment and Public Space program, its goals, 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:

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

Why is WPF prioritizing this objective?

Supporting community-based climate resilience planning helps ensure that communities in the cities of Philadelphia, Camden, and Chester are better prepared to reduce their vulnerability and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

The Greater Philadelphia region is already confronting the effects of climate change, and these impacts are expected to intensify. The region faces increasing risk from extreme precipitation events, extreme heat, and rising sea levels along the tidal Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. Average annual precipitation could rise by up to 12% by 2050. The number of days above 100 degrees could increase from fewer than one per year historically to as many as 17 per year by the end of the century. And sea levels are expected to rise by up to 45 inches by the 2080s.¹ Together, these changes will cause broad-reaching consequences, such as higher rates of heat-related illness and death, rising energy and insurance costs, and added strain on built and natural infrastructure.

These consequences will fall most heavily on communities already facing the legacy of decades of disinvestment and discrimination. To help communities reduce vulnerability and adapt to the impacts of climate change, WPF is supporting community-based climate resilience planning. Thoughtful planning grounded in authentic community engagement builds the transparency, trust, and legitimacy that leads to successful implementation of a resilience plan.

What types of projects will get funded?

WPF seeks to support community-driven, place-based planning processes that will enhance the climate resilience of communities in the cities of Philadelphia, Camden, and Chester. This RFP will support climate resilience planning – the process of assessing risk, engaging community members, and developing an implementable plan that will guide future resilience investments.

Proposals may request support for planning processes that address different types of climate impact vulnerability (e.g. heat, flooding, etc.) and/or planning that seeks to increase different types of climate impact adaptability (e.g. improving built and natural infrastructure; expanding community knowledge; supporting community leadership). Through this RFP, we anticipate funding projects that will initiate a new climate resilience planning process or continue an existing planning process. In either case, projects should result in a **complete** and **implementable** plan by the end of the grant period.



Flooding after Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020 in Philadelphia's Eastwick neighborhood/Philadelphia Fire Department

¹ Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. (2024, March). [Priority Climate Action Plan](#).

This RFP is **not** intended to fund implementation. However, we recognize that early visible action (e.g., pilot or demonstration projects) simultaneous with planning activities can generate trust, shape ideas, and build momentum that will result in successful implementation of the plan in the long-term. Applicants may allocate **up to 10%** of the total requested project funds for activities and pilot projects that are explicitly intended to build community trust, address urgent needs identified during the planning process, or test approaches that could inform future implementation. These pilot projects should be small-scale, near-term, and clearly connected to the broader planning effort. Examples of activities and pilot projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Distributing emergency supplies or opening cooling centers
- Installing temporary shade structures on a heat-vulnerable block
- Piloting a community alert system for flood events

What has to be in my proposal?

We are requesting proposals for **up to two years of funding**. Proposals should describe how the proposed work will establish **implementable** plans. Planning may include activities such as:

- assessing current conditions, such as vulnerabilities, needs, and assets
- developing and implementing strategies for community engagement
- identifying and building relationships with additional partners, and defining their roles and responsibilities
- establishing goals and priorities and defining the activities that will advance them
- outlining resources needed for implementation and potential funding sources

This RFP will support climate resilience planning – the process of assessing risk, engaging community members, and developing a plan to guide future resilience investments.

The Foundation recognizes that climate resilience planning requires a variety of tactics or approaches. Applicants may request support for any components of the planning process, including but not limited to outreach and education, community engagement, research and data analysis, and technical assistance.² In describing the proposed work, all submitted proposals should:

- describe the community or population that the proposed project will serve, including relevant characteristics related to historical disinvestment and climate vulnerability, and the approximate number of residents served,³
- identify the specific climate vulnerabilities that the planning process will address,
- describe the project deliverable that will be completed by the end of the grant term, and
- explain how the applicant(s) will coordinate with partners, including government agencies (as applicable).

All proposals that include the elements described above and meet the criteria described in the “Proposal Review” section are encouraged.

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.

² For applicants seeking technical support for climate resilience planning projects, the [Registry of Adaptation Practitioners](#) may be a helpful resource. This searchable database can help organizations to easily identify qualified practitioners that can provide the services required for a specific project.

³ To help inform this description, applicants may **optionally** reference data indicators such as demographic and socioeconomic data (e.g., U.S. Census/American Community Survey, CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index, HUD Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty) and climate and environmental risk data (e.g., FEMA National Risk Index, NOAA Climate Mapping for Resilience and Adaptation, PennEnviroScreen, New Jersey EJMAP). These indicators are offered as optional reference points, not requirements. Applicants are also welcome to describe their community through other means, including local knowledge, community-based assessments, or direct experience working with the population served.

Quick Check: Is This Opportunity a Good Fit?

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 your project occurring in the city of Philadelphia, the city of Camden, or the city of Chester?	☐	☐
Is your project focused on enhancing a defined community’s resilience to the impacts of climate change?	☐	☐
Is your project going to produce a complete and implementable climate resilience plan by the end of the grant period?	☐	☐
Is the applicant a 501(c)3 nonprofit, operating under a fiscal sponsor, or a government entity?	☐	☐

! Also review **all** the criteria on the following pages to make sure your program aligns with those before you apply.

What types of organizations are eligible for funding?

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.

Proposal Review

! Applicants must address these criteria in their responses within the Project Narrative section of the application. Proposals will be judged on the criteria and additional expectations below.

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.
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			

What else will be expected in my proposal?

Historically Disinvested Populations	Proposals that primarily serve historically disinvested populations, including communities of color and low-income communities, will be most competitive.
Geographic Prioritization	Where proposals are equally strong with regard to the criteria shown on the previous page, WPF will prioritize support for planning processes that focus on areas without an existing climate resilience plan or planning effort. ⁴
Coordination with Relevant Efforts	Proposals that demonstrate awareness of and intention to coordinate with other relevant planning processes will be most competitive. Proposals that focus on areas where climate resilience planning is already underway should explain how the proposed work will be complementary to the existing effort, rather than duplicative. ⁴
Project Deliverable	Proposed projects should result in a complete and implementable climate resilience plan by the end of the grant term. Once complete, the plan must be easily accessible to participants, partners, collaborators, and all potential beneficiaries. Proposals should fully describe the anticipated components of the completed plan.
Compensation for Partners and Community Members	Partner organizations and community participants should be appropriately compensated for their roles and contributions. ⁵
Budget	The requested budget should be reasonable for the proposed activities and stated results.

⁴ WPF has provided support for climate resilience planning in the following areas: Eastwick, East Parkside, Germantown, Grays Ferry, Hunting Park, Strawberry Mansion, South, and Southwest in Philadelphia; and East Camden in the city of Camden. For more information, see [awarded grants](#) on our website and filter by Objective: Climate Resilience Plans.

⁵ For guidance on this topic, see Urban Land Institute's [Equitable Compensation for Community Engagement Guidebook](#).

Budget

How much money is available?

The maximum amount of funding that organizations may request for direct expenses is **\$300,000**. Applicants are welcome to request any amount up to that maximum. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the work required and described to complete the project.

WPF has \$2 million available through this RFP to advance this objective.

What should I include in my proposed 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 compensation to community members for their time and expertise. Proposals may allocate up to 10% of the total requested project funds to activities and pilot projects that are explicitly intended to build community trust, address urgent needs identified during the planning process, or test approaches that could inform future implementation (see page 4 for examples). If applicable, any project implementation costs should be described in the proposal narrative.

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

What if my proposal includes any advocacy or lobbying activities?

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:

- Show in the budget submitted by the applicant that the amount requested from the Foundation is less than 80% of the total project budget.
- 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.)

- 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.)
- 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.

Anything else I should know?

If you are awarded funding, you will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how you have made progress toward the objective above and what you have learned during the year.

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.

How to Apply

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions in the “Quick Check” on page 6 and meet all the review criteria on pages 7 and 8, 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 ET on Thursday, October 22, 2026**. 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.

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, Program Officer for Environment and Public Space** at ajones@williampennfoundation.org.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an optional informational webinar on **Thursday, September 17, 2026 at 11:00AM ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/william penn foundation>.

Timeline

September 9, 2026

Proposal submission period opens.

September 17, 2026

Informational Webinar (see bottom of this page)

October 22, 2026

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

November 11-16, 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.

November 16-

December 14, 2026

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

February 5, 2027

WPF Board review selected proposals.

February 8, 2027

Project implementation can begin

Definition of Terms

Historically Disinvested Populations: Communities that have experienced sustained, systemic exclusion from public and private investment—including infrastructure, housing, and economic development funding—as a result of discriminatory policies, and that as a result face heightened vulnerability to climate impacts and reduced capacity to prepare for, respond, and recover from those impacts.

Intended Beneficiaries: A group or community that a project, initiative, or organization aims to engage and positively impact. Identifying the intended beneficiaries helps ensure that the goals and strategies of the project are tailored to address the needs of those it aims to serve.