

September 14, 2022

DEEP Climate Resilience Fund Program

NOTICE OF CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Introduction

The [DEEP Climate Resilience Fund](#) provides grants to help Connecticut communities initiate planning and develop projects that will help communities become more resilient to the effects of climate change. The Fund specifically is intended to support climate resilience planning at regional, municipal, and neighborhood-level scales, and to support resilience project scoping and development. This historic state-level investment into climate resilience planning and project development was established by [Executive Order 21-3](#) (EO21-3) in December 2021 and was one of 61 recommendations from the [Governor's Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) in 2021.

The creation of this climate resilience funding program will assist Connecticut communities in securing the historic level of federal funding for climate resilience available through by the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (“*IJA*”), which provides nearly \$47 billion nationally over the next 5 years to help communities prepare for climate-related hazards, and the newly enacted federal *Inflation Reduction Act*.

To ensure that Connecticut's communities are at the front of the line for these largely competitive federal investments, **this program will help Connecticut communities develop a climate resilience project pipeline that can win competitive federal grants to substantially fund implementation and construction.**

Call for Applications

In response to EO 21-3 and pursuant to CGS Sec. 16-243y and authorized bond funds under Public Act 21-111, DEEP intends to make available up to \$10 million in this first round through the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund. This call for applications provides opportunities for funding under two tracks:

Track 1: Resilience Planning. This track provides support for all activities and costs related to developing a climate resilience plan, which includes a vulnerability assessment, at the regional, municipal, or neighborhood level. Funding can include technical consultants and community engagement costs.

Track 1 climate resilience planning activities do not need to align with a specific federal grant opportunity, unlike Track 2. For example, if a community wanted to assess its grid resilience, that activity is eligible under planning, even if the resilience project solution is not something the community would design and build with federal funding.

DEEP and partners will offer Track 1 grantees training opportunities for understanding federal resilience grant competitions.

Track 2: Resilience Project Development: This track would provide support for activities related to advancing resilience project ideas and developing competitive federal grant applications, including funding technical consultants and community engagement costs. Track 2 applicants should review their target federal resilience grant program(s) to ensure their project is within the scope of that program(s). DEEP will not fund resilience project development in this track that does not align with a federal grant opportunity. For example, green infrastructure for resilience and water quality aligns with the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. Flood protection for properties and preventing power outages would align with the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities program. (See more grant programs below.)

Projects funded under these two tracks must be consistent with the conditions of [EO21-3](#) and as further detailed below. Applicants for both tracks can include grant writing as part of their budget request.



Note: Activities that fit under Track 1 and Track 2 are eligible for funding under this proposal. Expenses related to implementation and construction are not eligible activities under this program.

Track 1: Planning

Applicants can seek up to \$250,000 (DEEP expects awards to range between \$100,000 and \$200,000) to fund climate resilience planning that addresses the impacts of climate-related hazards, including how climate change increases weather-related risks. Planning outcomes must include a prioritized list of next steps and an assessment of municipal match funding capacity for implementation. The result and one of the final deliverables must be a plan that can be implemented. Plans can be at the regional, municipal, or neighborhood level (“hyper-local”) scale. Applicants may include funding for community engagement activities, including community liaisons intended to support engagement to vulnerable populations. We encourage applicants to include in their budget requests for funding for writing federal grant applications to support next steps and implementation.

Proposals with a stakeholder-driven process and meaningful community collaboration and involvement will be the most competitive. Proposals to solely conduct a vulnerability assessment or update existing planning will not be competitive. Grants shall be awarded only to applicants that meet the Review Criteria and subject to the Commissioner’s discretion.

For example, if a community received planning funding through Superstorm Sandy relief dollars, a Track 2 application to advance projects identified in that process will be more competitive than a Track 1 application to update an older coastal resilience plan.

Funded Activities:

- Climate resilience planning that addresses the impacts of climate-related hazards
- Community engagement to support climate resilience planning

Applications will be evaluated and ultimately selected based upon the following review criteria:

Review Criteria

- Overall potential impact of the plan to improve community climate resilience
- Clearly identifies the planning scale as regional, municipal or neighborhood level (“hyper-local”.)
- Degree to which the vulnerability assessment and planning process is collaborative and stakeholder-driven
- Demonstrated plan to have participation from multiple local government departments
- Demonstrated collaboration and partnership between local government and relevant community organizations for plan development
- Strength and depth of stakeholder and community involvement and engagement, with at least three (3) public meetings, including one (1) to communicate report findings
- Examination of current and future climate conditions out to 2050 due to climate change and sea level rise for planning and assessment
- Vulnerability assessment centers on impacts from climate change and resulting community impacts, including to identified critical facilities¹ and [community lifelines](#)
- Vulnerability assessment examines social vulnerability
- Planning serves or benefits environmental justice or vulnerable communities
- For neighborhood-level planning: demonstrated collaboration and partnership with community organizations and local governments
- Inclusion of prioritized list of next steps that:
 - Incorporates the Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaption’s (CIRCA) [PERSISTS](#) framework for project identification
 - Identifies federal resilience grant competitions targeted for funding future implementation steps
 - Includes a locally derived match funding strategy exercise that examines measures authorized in An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation ([Public Act 21-115](#))
- Exploration of solutions that incorporate co-benefits (i.e., addresses multiple issues, creates an amenity to the community, reduces GHG emissions, comprehensive approach to risk reduction)
- Exploration of nature-based solutions and hybrid approaches
- Proposal is technically sound and feasible, with a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline
- Proposal costs are allowable and reasonable
- For those applicants who have previously received funding through DEEP, past performance will be a factor considered in the approval process

¹ Pursuant to EO21-3, critical facilities include all facilities deemed critical by the local, state, or federal governments; wastewater treatment plants; power generation facilities; data storage facilities; emergency shelters; and police and fire facilities.

Track 2: Project Development

Applicants can seek funds to advance resilience project scoping and development that leads to federal funding for implementation. While there is no cap on the amount of funding that can be requested, DEEP expects to fund most project development grant application requests in a range of \$300,000 to \$700,000. The overall goal is to help communities and project teams develop competitive applications for federal resilience competitions that will support construction and implementation. We encourage applicants to include in their budget specific requests for funding for writing federal grant applications for supporting next steps and implementation.

Eligible projects funded under this program include nature-based solutions, such as green infrastructure; flood prevention, climate resilience, and erosion control systems; and gray infrastructure and non-structural project solutions that improve community resilience to climate-related hazards. Projects in this program must be integrated in existing plans that ensure their eligibility for federal funding through existing and new resilience programs. Projects that advance nature-based solutions, hybrid approaches, address multiple issues, and/or include non-structural solutions will be more competitive.

Funded activities include:

- Project scoping
- Site studies and selection
- Preliminary designs
- Engineering studies and analyses, including hydrologic and hydraulic studies
- Feasibility analysis
- Environmental compliance data collection
- Incorporating environmental planning and historic preservation considerations
- Benefit-cost analysis
- Community engagement to support all activities
- Additional activities that lead to the development of a competitive application to federal resilience competitions

Applications will be evaluated and ultimately selected based upon the following review criteria:

Review Criteria

- Project's overall potential to improve community climate resilience
- Application identifies and aligns with federal resilience grant programs that the applicant intends to pursue to fund implementation
- Project is identified in previous planning activities
- Project is consistent with the municipal Plan of Conservation and Development
- Project incorporates the impacts of climate change into design
- Project serves or benefits environmental justice or vulnerable communities
- Strength and depth of stakeholder and community involvement and engagement, with at least two (2) public meetings, including one (1) to communicate results.
- Project connects with CIRCA's [PERSISTS](#) framework
- Final report includes a draft project narrative for federal applications
- Final report includes a locally derived match funding strategy exercise that examines measures authorized in An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation ([Public Act 21-115](#))
- Project includes elements of nature-based solutions

- Project has co-benefits (i.e., reduces GHG emissions, addresses multiple issues, creates an amenity to the community, comprehensive approach to risk reduction)
- Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline
- Project costs are allowable and reasonable
- For those applicants who have previously received funding through DEEP, past performance will be a factor considered in the approval process

All Track 2 applications must show where the proposed project has been previously identified in prior planning activities. Activities supported through Track 2 funding should connect with the [PERSISTS](#) framework to ensure that climate resilience projects are Permissible, Equitable, Realistic, Safe, Innovative, Scientific, Transferable, and Sustainable. Though the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund is not primarily intended to assist communities with reducing greenhouse gas emissions, plans and projects that have the co-benefit of building resilience while reducing greenhouse gas emissions are highly encouraged.

To achieve the goal of creating a project pipeline for [IIJA funding opportunities](#), the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund will require Track 2 applicants to 1) identify which federal resilience grant programs they intend to pursue for implementation funding and 2) prepare draft narratives for those applications as part of their final deliverables.

Federal resilience grant competitions for communities include, but are not limited to:

- [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\) program](#)
- [FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program \(HMGP\)](#)
- [FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Program \(FMA\)](#)
- [National Fish and Wildlife Federation \(NFWF\) National Coastal Resilience Fund \(NCRF\)](#)
- [NFWF Long Island Sound Futures Fund \(LISFF\)](#)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants](#)
- NOAA [Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Underserved Communities](#)
- [Clean Water Fund](#) Reserve for Construction of Green Infrastructure and Reserve for Construction of Resiliency Projects

Funding may also be available for projects through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). DEEP will continue to update the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund website with potential grant opportunities as they are announced.

Required Application Materials and Letters of Support

Applicants must submit all applications and supporting materials to DEEP.climate resilience@ct.gov by the deadlines listed below.

For Track 1: Applicants must submit the application and letters of support.

For Track 2: Applicants must submit the application, relevant planning documents, any supporting materials they wish to share with DEEP, and letters of support.

Note: If the primary applicant is not a municipality, letters of support from local governments should make staff time commitments for specific tasks in the planning process.

Application Deadlines:

- **For Track 1: Planning:** Applications must be emailed to DEEP.climate resilience@ct.gov by 11:59 p.m., Thursday, November 10, 2022
- **For Track 2: Project Development:** Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, December, 1, 2022. DEEP will begin reviewing applications October 21. Applications must be emailed to DEEP.climate resilience@ct.gov.

Community Engagement

Resilience planning and implementation activities are best accomplished with substantial and inclusive community engagement, with residents and stakeholders consulted throughout the process, including at the very beginning. Competitive applications to federal resilience funding opportunities will demonstrate strong commitments to engaging residents, with strong focuses on effectively engaging and partnering with environmental justice communities and vulnerable populations. To foster this goal, applicants must describe how they will conduct comprehensive and inclusive community engagement.

Track 1 applications: Applicants must commit to conducting a minimum of 3 public meetings during the period of performance, including one to communicate findings to residents with one last opportunity to provide feedback/input to the planning team.

Track 2 applications: As projects are required to have already been identified through previous planning, applicants must commit to conducting a minimum of 2 public meetings during the period of performance, including one for initial input from the public and one to communicate findings. All proposed engagement strategies must be commensurate with the scope and depth of the work proposed in the application.

Project teams are strongly encouraged to conduct more than the minimum number of meetings and should describe how public engagement opportunities will be accessible to vulnerable populations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to go above and beyond past standards of practice and use the resources provided to develop an inclusive and comprehensive plan for public outreach and engagement. This can include:

- Hiring a community liaison as part of the consultant team to support with outreach to vulnerable people
- Providing childcare, transportation, and food at meetings
- Translating outreach materials
- Providing professional interpretation at public meetings.
- Providing gift cards or stipends to participants in meetings serving vulnerable populations.

Community Liaison

The Community Liaison Model is an engagement strategy where the project teams contract with community-based organizations or individuals serving vulnerable communities and people. The liaisons are paid consultants and primary tasks are to manage public involvement and meaningful community engagement that is culturally competent and inclusive. Applicants can request funding for a community liaison as part of their overall budget. They should include in this in their descriptions about partners and engagement strategies and include the funding in their requested budget. Applicants should include a letter of support from the organization or individual they intend to work with in this role, along with a resume.

Vulnerable Populations Priority

Pursuant to EO 21-3, “Funding for this program should be allocated to ensure that at least 40% of resources for municipalities are targeted to municipalities where vulnerable populations, as defined in CGS Sec. 16-243y, reside and where plans are developed specifically to address the needs of identified vulnerable populations.” This means if DEEP makes \$10 million in grant awards, at least \$4 million must go to communities that are classified as serving vulnerable populations based on the criteria below. The application provides the resources and questions to assist applicants with providing this information to DEEP.

Pursuant to CGS Sec. 16-243y(7), “vulnerable communities” means populations that may be disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change, including, but not limited to,

- Low- and moderate-income communities,
- [Environmental justice communities](#) pursuant to section 22a-20a,
- Communities eligible for community reinvestment pursuant to section 36a-30 and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, 12 USC 2901 et seq., as amended from time to time,
- Populations with increased risk and limited means to adapt to the effects of climate change, including:
 - Communities of color
 - Children and seniors
 - Low-income communities
 - People with disabilities
 - Pregnant people
 - People with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
 - Other historically disadvantaged people
 - People impacted by the social determinants of health
 - Populations identified by the American Public Health Association.
- Or as further defined by DEEP in consultation with community representatives.

Applications for both Track 1 and 2 include a section to assist project teams with identifying whether their plan or project will serve vulnerable populations.

Track 1 and 2 applications that do not meet the vulnerable populations criteria described above are still eligible for funding under this grant program. However, applications that meet the vulnerable populations criteria will be prioritized for funding over applications that do not meet the criteria, provided the applications also satisfy the other review criteria.

Amount Available

A total amount of \$10 million will be made available in this first round. Match funding for this program's application is not required. However, all grantees in both tracks must complete an exercise on developing locally derived match federal resilience competitions as part of their final deliverables to support future applications for implementation funding.

- **For Track 1: Planning:** DEEP expects awards to range between \$100,000 and \$200,000, but applicants may seek up to \$250,000.
- **For Track 2: Project Development:** DEEP expects awards to range between \$300,000 to \$700,000, but there is no formal cap on what applicants can request.

The DEEP Climate Resilience Fund is authorized through state bond funds, which are primarily disbursed on a reimbursement basis. If a potential applicant cannot work via a reimbursement process, they may contact DEEP once an award has been announced and the contracting process has begun to discuss needs. If an applicant has questions about this process prior to submitting an application, they can contact DEEP at DEEP.climateresilience@ct.gov.

Reporting requirements

If selected for a DEEP Climate Resilience Fund award, the project team must submit quarterly progress reports to DEEP. (A template will be provided to all grantees.) All progress reports will be posted on the DEEP website.

Ownership and Credit Due

All materials, software, maps, reports, and other products produced through the grant program shall be considered in the public domain and thus available. To the extent possible, a copy of any data produced using this grant funding must be submitted to the state as part of the deliverables and will be made available publicly. All materials created through this opportunity and as a result of this award shall credit DEEP and the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund.

Technical Assistance

DEEP and partners will support grantees with technical assistance within available resources to ensure they apply the best available science and maximize existing climate resilience resources. DEEP and partners will host a technical assistance workshop for all grantees in 2023.

Required Deliverables

The following final deliverables will be required for each track:

Track 1: A copy of the final plan, a separate executive summary highlighting the process and lessons learned, a copy of a funding assessment exercise, a copy of the prioritized list of next steps (unless it's incorporated already in the final plan), and a presentation slide communicating accomplishments and lessons learned. All of these materials will be made available on the DEEP website.

Track 2: A copy of the funded activity, a separate executive summary highlighting the process and lessons learned, a copy of a funding assessment exercise, a copy of the draft project narrative for a federal grant application, and a presentation slide communicating accomplishments and lessons learned. All of these materials will be made available on the DEEP website.

Applicant Eligibility

All entities that work in or around the resilience sector are eligible to apply, including municipalities, councils of government, nonprofits, academic institutions, and private entities seeking to develop climate resilience planning and projects. All projects must demonstrate strong commitment and partnership with local governments and community organizations.

Partnerships that demonstrate community collaboration through strong resident and stakeholder engagement throughout the process are strongly encouraged.

Contracting Process and Project Duration

The contract period will begin on the date the parties execute the contract or a later date specified in the contract. Contracts issued pursuant to program must expend 100% of costs associated with the approved project, including awarded grant funds, on or before the contract end date.

- **For Track 1: Planning:** A duration of up to 24 months from the contract execution date, depending on project scope, complexity, and community engagement plan.
- **For Track 2: Project Development:** A duration of up to 18 months from the contract execution date, depending on project scope, complexity, and community engagement plan.