2022 Collaborative Grant Program
Request for Proposals

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Timeline. Table 1 summarizes the Request for Proposal (RFP) process by due date.

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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFP Release</td>
<td>June 1, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Call</td>
<td>June 16, 2022, at 1 pm ET; Zoom link here</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposals Due</td>
<td>September 15, 2022, at 3 pm ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisions Announced</td>
<td>October 7, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Completion Date</td>
<td>December 1, 2023</td>
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Fund Overview. The Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange (“the Exchange”) is a highly connected peer learning network that offers a platform for utilities, municipalities, cities, and counties to share experiences, circulate ideas, and solve problems together toward finding more sustainable water infrastructure solutions. The Exchange strives to activate local governments in the US and Canada to equitably implement GSI. They do this by supporting peer learning, innovation and collaboration among cities, counties, and utilities.

The Exchange’s Collaborative Grant Program¹ is designed to fund opportunities to share knowledge that can creatively improve the speed, cost, effectiveness, and equity of local GSI programs through collaborative ventures. Resources created through the grant program may become components of an emerging GSI Playbook that the Exchange is developing.

The Exchange’s work addresses three field advancing pillars and six network focus areas (Figure 1).

¹ The Exchange Collaborative Grant program also advises other stormwater-focused grant programs, for alignment around opportunities.
Proposing teams are encouraged to consult with Exchange staff and Peer Learning Circles (PLCs) to identify project ideas that align with and build on previous progress within this framework. All proposals must:

1. Articulate how an identified knowledge gap will be filled, and / or how a framework will be created to inform the approach to one of the network’s focus areas.
2. Involve a diversity of partners, including public, private, and non-profit sectors.
3. Identify the target audience for the work and describe how they will be reached.

There is one proposal form posted with this RFP. Table 2 describes project types, funding, and participation.

Table 2. 2022 RFP proposal options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Participation Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Member-to-Member GSI Collaborations</td>
<td>Up to $60,000 USD request</td>
<td>Conduct deep dives for collaborative problem-solving with well-researched supplemental documentation.</td>
<td>At least 2 Exchange members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSI Community Leader Connections</td>
<td>Up to $60,000 USD request</td>
<td>Align with community leaders at the grassroots level around community GSI goals.</td>
<td>At least 1 Exchange member and 1 grassroots community leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing Collaborative Grant Program Tools</td>
<td>Up to $15,000 USD request</td>
<td>Host training sessions that teach participants how to apply resources created by past Collaborative Grant projects. These can be train-the-trainer workshops with Exchange members, or deep-dive training opportunities for key personnel at member organizations.</td>
<td>At least 4 Exchange members OR 1 lead Exchange member and at least 4 other colleagues within their organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Adaptive, Responsive Utility Innovation Challenge</td>
<td>Up to $15,000 USD request</td>
<td>Place-based challenges to business as usual. Ideas will lead to policy, procedural, or organizational changes. This includes developing new approaches, processes, or methods. It is creative, out-of-the-box work.</td>
<td>At least 1 Exchange member and 2 colleagues from another city or utility department</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Award Budget and Selection Process.** The total funding available is $160,000. It is anticipated that the Selection Committee (SC) will make 1-2 awards for proposals requesting up to $60,000 and 3-4 awards for proposals requesting up to $15,000. The SC is composed of Exchange staff and volunteer network members. Proposal leaders may be asked to slightly modify scopes to lower costs during award negotiations. Participants are encouraged to minimize expenses as much as possible through creative means such as utilizing virtual meeting tools and leveraging in-kind support. Any unused funds are either

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2 The Equity Guide for Green Stormwater Infrastructure Practitioners is an example of a grant output that was guided by the Placing Equity at the Center Peer Learning Circle.
repurposed to further support the work or return to the grant pool at the conclusion of the work. Proposers can reach out to Exchange staff to ground-truth cost estimates from possible partners prior to the proposal due date.

**Eligibility Requirements.** To be eligible, all proposals must: (1) be submitted and led by an Exchange member; (2) meet the participation requirements in Table 2 by selected proposal type; and (3) complete by December 1, 2023. Member-to-Member GSI Collaborations and GSI Community Leader Connections proposals must state marketing, graphic design, and dissemination costs. Proposers should highlight how equity will be integrated into the proposal, including inviting and encouraging minority-owned businesses to bid and ensuring an equitable selection process. A list of consultants that the Exchange has successfully worked with in the past can be accessed here. Please feel free to suggest others who are a fit for this list.

**Integrating Equity.** All proposers are strongly encouraged to practice equity in project design and implementation. Equity work requires focus on power-building for frontline communities by requiring the creation of structures that shift power and share power, enhance accountability, and promote learning across sectors. The Exchange has identified the following shared equity goals:

- Align with community priorities and give power to communities to define solutions and benefits.
- Expose and stop the perpetuation of inequitable investments in communities.
- Stand firm and courageously to advance equity as essential practice for excellent green infrastructure work.
- Create space for the voices of communities often forgotten, silenced, excluded, and harmed by the status quo, and center these voices as expert leaders.

Four different forms of equity can be advanced through design and decision-making within policy, program development, and implementation processes. Applicants should state how the proposed project incorporates equity in one or more of the following ways:

- **Spatial:** One’s zip code does not determine one’s privilege or quality of life.
- **Identity:** One’s race, gender, ability, age, economic status, and other identities do not determine one’s privilege or quality of life.
- **Process:** Consider who has access to decision-making and decision-makers and whether this group can be more inclusive.
- **Power:** Consider who has influence and control over resources and whether this group can be more inclusive.

The Exchange has created the following equity related documents they may be useful to applicants:

1) **Equity Guide for Green Infrastructure Practitioners:** Describes how well-designed and deliberately managed green infrastructure programs can directly impact equity by: (1) expanding nature in communities; (2) increasing resilience to climate hazards; (3) improving properties; (4) investing in economic stability; (5) creating spaces that facilitate community cohesion; (6) increasing community participation and power; and (7) building trust and acknowledge past harms.

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3 Frontline Communities are those most impacted by systems of oppression and injustice, economic disadvantage, and environmental harm. The frontline community can be represented by individual organizations, groups of organizations, or individual community members.
2) **Equity Statement of Purpose:** Presents the Exchange’s organizational position on equity within the green infrastructure sector.

3) **Equity Guidelines for Exchange Leaders:** Provide Exchange leaders, including grant leads, a set of practical guidelines for centering equity in their Exchange-related work.

One way to clearly convey how the project will address equity is to build in equity-related budget line items. For example, stipends can be used to compensate frontline community members as they participate in project work. Or a trusted equity specialist can be hired to facilitate collaborative conversations. If the proposing team feels that the topic does not have relevant equity considerations, they must clearly state their reasoning for this in their proposal.

**Technical Assistance Opportunities.** Proposers are encouraged to discuss initial project ideas with Exchange staff Kasey Armstrong prior to proposal development. Staff can provide preliminary guidance, connect members with potential collaborators within the network, and include project ideas as part of PLC agendas. Questions or requests for feedback about proposals in development should be addressed to fund management. Reference The Award Guidelines and Policies document here and posted with this RFP to learn more about fund processes for awarded projects. This resource is built to address frequently asked questions from proposers and grantees alike.