2021 Collaborative Grant Program
Request for Proposals

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFP Release</td>
<td>June 1, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Call</td>
<td>June 17, 2021 at 12 pm ET; Zoom link <a href="#">here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals Due</td>
<td>September 16, 2021 at 3 pm ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions Announced</td>
<td>October 8, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Completion Date</td>
<td>December 1, 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fund Overview. The Green Infrastructure (GI) Leadership Exchange ("the Exchange") is a member-led peer-to-peer learning practitioner network that offers a platform for communities to share experiences, circulate ideas, and solve problems together toward finding more sustainable water infrastructure solutions. The GI Exchange’s Collaborative Grant Program1 is designed to fund opportunities to share knowledge that can creatively improve the speed, cost, and/or effectiveness of local green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) programs through collaborative ventures. Resources created through the grant program are components of the emerging GSI Playbook that the GI Exchange seeks to develop.

There are two proposal forms in this RFP. The first supports member-to-member GSI collaborations. The second supports GSI Community Leader Connections, for those who want to better align their green infrastructure work with grassroots community leaders.2 In form 2, collaboration with other network members is encouraged but not required.

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1 The GI Exchange Collaborative Grant program also advises other stormwater-focused grant programs, for alignment around opportunities.

2 Grassroots community leaders are community change agents. These leaders are passionate about their community and initiate change through organizing and meeting with community members to assess needs, develop a vision, and implement improvements. (Adapted from Michigan State University, What is Grassroots Community leadership and development?)
Award Budget and Selection Process. The total funding available is $130,000. It is anticipated that the Selection Committee (SC) will make 2 to 3 awards and will support both proposal types. The SC is comprised of GI Exchange staff and volunteer network members. They will consider proposals with significant budgets, but 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 repurposed to further support the work or return to the grant pool at the conclusion of the work. Proposers can reach out to GI 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 GI Exchange member; (2) list at least 1 other primary participating GI Exchange member (Form 1) or grassroots community leader (Form 2) in addition to the lead member; and (3) complete by December 1, 2022.

Network Focus Areas. The GI Exchange has identified the following six focus areas:

- Placing equity at the center of stormwater work
- Innovations in funding and financing
- Planning and resilience
- Innovations in design
- Maximizing GSI performance
- Asset management

Proposers must articulate how the proposing members will work to fill an identified knowledge gap that directly addresses the selected focus area. GI Exchange members must describe what type of collaboration they see as most practical and effective for addressing the chosen focus area, and why.

Driving Innovation. Innovation is a core value of the GI Exchange, and involves the developing, testing, and refining of new ways to solve GSI challenges. Ideally, innovations evolve into mainstream solutions over time. Proposers are encouraged to test new and creative ways to advance GSI practices, to envision how the work can become mainstream, and to describe what changes could occur as a result.

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 GI 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.

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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.

4 From the December 2020 Exchange Equity Point of View working document created through the Equity Framework grant.
● 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:

- **Procedural equity**: Ensuring that processes are fair and inclusive in the development and implementation of any program or policy. Those who are most impacted (on the frontline) are prioritized for participation and through influence in decision-making.

- **Distributional equity**: Ensuring that resources or benefits and burdens of a policy, program, or investment are distributed in a way that prioritizes those with highest systemic need first.

- **Structural equity**: A commitment and action to correct past harms and prevent future negative consequences by institutionalizing accountability and decision-making structures that aim to sustain positive outcomes.

- **Intergenerational equity**: Decisions consider generational impacts and do not result in unfair burdens on future generations.

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.** Reference The Award Guidelines and Policies document [here](#) and posted with this RFP to understand fund processes. This resource is built to address frequently asked questions from proposers and grantees alike. If questions linger after review, reach out to [Susanna Sutherland](#). Applicants are also encouraged to discuss proposal design with GI Exchange staff [Kasey Armstrong](#), and/or [Kate O’Brien](#) before the proposal due date. Staff can vet ideas with applicants and troubleshoot with grantees throughout the life of the project, as questions arise and with support from fund management. GI Exchange staff do not manage awarded work or contribute labor to create its outputs.
Proposal Form 1.
Member-to-Member GSI Collaborations

Submission Instructions. Delete blue text as this form is completed. It is here to assist in developing a proposal that speaks directly to the Selection Criteria. Email 5-page proposals in Word format to Susanna Sutherland by 3 pm EDT on September 16, 2021.

Member-to-member GSI collaboration approaches. This proposal supports member-to-member GSI collaborations. Collaboration with other members within the network is required. Project examples are:

- Collaborative research, such as:
  - a literature review to reveal available science or data that can help address a GSI challenge
  - an in-person or web-based survey of best practices for cost-effective GSI implementation
- Expert training, such as:
  - a webinar series featuring subject matter experts on cutting-edge GSI approaches
- Innovative program approaches, such as:
  - a member-led review of a pilot program to determine its effectiveness and relevance to the field at regional and/or national scales
- In-depth peer learning, such as:
  - a convening of members and applicable technical and community partners to learn from each other about how to address a specific GSI challenge
  - a site visit study or learning tour by members and applicable technical and community partners to a selected community to learn about specific aspects of their GSI program
  - *Note: Virtual convenings encouraged - check travel advisories for in-person events*
- A custom concept proposed by GI Exchange members, such as:
  - any other relevant collaboration that serves to improve the speed, cost, equity, and effectiveness of local GSI programs

The GI Exchange encourages proposers to include:
- People from other local government and/or utility departments
- Community members
- A third-party such as facilitators or research consultants to support completion of the work

Each Member-to-Member GSI Collaboration proposal will be evaluated against the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration will benefit at least 2 GI Exchange members communities</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration will take place within 12 months of award announcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration outlines a plan for the work to be sustained, if applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed collaboration is innovative</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for members to gain valuable knowledge and best practices from new connections</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for members to solve an important problem and save time and money for members</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for members to change approaches, policies, and/or processes as a result of peer learning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed collaboration includes field-building partners</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for members to integrate procedural, distributional, structural, intergenerational equity into initiatives</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for members to increase the quality and pace of project implementation, adoption, and scaling</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for the work to be sustained, if applicable, communicated widely, and replicated by others</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please answer the following questions as clearly and succinctly as possible:

1. **Project Title.** 6 words max, a short statement of intended output (e.g., “Stormwater Utility Toolkit”)

2. **Amount Requested.** In US dollars (USD)

3. **Project Purpose.** Brief project description in 25 words or less

4. **Lead GI Exchange Member.** Name, title, and contact information: address, e-mail, and phone number

5. **Other Primary GI Exchange Member.** Name, title, and contact information: address, e-mail, and phone number

6. **Other Participants.** A list of any other participating members, non-members, and/or technical partners participating in the collaboration, including individual names and titles. Explain the role of each participant in the collaboration and how they are key to the effort’s success

7. **Summary.** A one-paragraph summary of the proposed collaboration. Include a vision for the products and impact of the work

8. **Network Focus Area(s).** List the network focus area(s) that this proposal addresses and provide description of how the proposed activities will advance it. Reference the Network Focus Areas section on page 2 of this RFP.

9. **Innovation.** A description of how the work will develop, test, or refine new and creative ways to advance GSI practices. Include a statement on how the work may be able to become mainstream, and what changes might occur within the field as a result

10. **Expected Benefits.** A description of the expected benefits of the proposed collaboration, including the potential for members to:
   a. gain valuable knowledge and best practices from new connections (e.g., members will learn about alternative project delivery approaches that will help inform their programs)
   b. solve an important problem and save time and money for members (e.g., participants will learn about a new GSI design technique that will help improve installation cost/efficiency)
   c. change programmatic approaches, policies, and/or processes as a result of peer learning (e.g., collaboration will lead to the adoption of new standards for rainwater harvesting)
   d. involve partners (e.g., collaboration will result in strong connections between members, subject matter experts, non-traditional GI personnel, and/or community members)
   e. integrate equity considerations into the work products (if not, note why not)
   f. increase the quality and pace of project implementation, adoption, and scaling (e.g., collaboration will produce guidelines that contribute to the standardization of the GSI field)
g. be sustained, if applicable, communicated widely, and replicated by others (if the work does not need to be sustained over time, note that the output will not require ongoing maintenance or ongoing collaboration after the grant has closed)

11. Project Management. A detailed project plan, timeline, and budget for the collaboration, outlining how the project will be executed. Use the following Table template:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Payment Source and Recipient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe what actions the project team will take during the grant period</td>
<td>Outline what will be sent to the GI Exchange (e.g., report, workshop presentation details, toolkit, etc.)</td>
<td>Note an exact date this will be delivered to the GI Exchange; this serves as a target, so that delivery expectations are clear</td>
<td>Note any associated payment connected to this deliverable: amount, source, and recipient. This column should sum to the total requested amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Example: Activity 1: Research scan and benchmark inventory</td>
<td>Example: Deliverable 1: Findings report</td>
<td>Example: January 29, 2022</td>
<td>Example: Payment #1 upon receipt of Deliverable 1: $15,000 to [Consulting Firm Name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Deliverable:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Payment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Deliverable:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Payment:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project Management Tips. Project activities, deliverables, due dates, and payments should be clear:
- Add a row for each planned output to be delivered to the GI Exchange
- Provide as much detail as possible on proposed activities, products, and payments to recipient(s)
- Keep it simple. Bundle activities into ~2-5 major deliverables; more than that is too many
- Estimate high. Add a month more than you think each one will take

If awarded, this table becomes how the work is agreed upon and tracked over time. It is a good idea for grantees to add finalized dates to their calendars upon award agreement execution.
Proposal Form 2.
GSI Community Leader Connections

Submission Instructions. Delete blue text as this form is completed. It is here to assist in developing a proposal that speaks directly to the Selection Criteria. Email 5-page proposals in Word format to Susanna Sutherland by 3 pm EDT on September 16, 2021.

GSI Community Leader Connections approaches. This proposal supports GI Exchange members in aligning with community priorities and giving power to communities through the shared equity goals in the RFP. Through this funding, GI Exchange members better align their green infrastructure work with grassroots community leaders. Eligible work includes any project, survey, convening, or initiative that improves alignment of municipal green infrastructure programs with community leaders and needs. Examples are:

- A convening of municipal and community leaders to co-create an equitable neighborhood green infrastructure plan.
- A survey of municipal community leaders to determine the acceptance and value of past green infrastructure work to their neighborhoods that will inform future efforts.
- A training or leadership development program for community members seeking to engage more directly in green infrastructure work.

Collaboration with other members within the network is encouraged, but not required. It is highly recommended that proposals include a third-party such as facilitators or research consultants to support completion of the work. Each GSI Community Leader Connections proposal will be evaluated against the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration will benefit at least 1 GI Exchange member community and 1 grassroots community leader</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration will take place within 12 months of award announcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed collaboration outlines a plan for the work to be sustained, if applicable</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Proposed collaboration directly engages community members in the work</td>
<td>15</td>
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Answer the following questions as clearly and succinctly as possible:

1. Project Title. 6 words max, a short statement of intended output (e.g., “Community-Driven GSI Planning”)
2. Amount Requested. In US dollars (USD)
3. **Project Purpose.** Brief project description in 25 words or less

4. **Lead GI Exchange Member.** Name, title, and contact information: address, e-mail, and phone number

5. **Grassroots Community Leader(s).** Name, title, and contact information: address, e-mail, and phone number

6. **Other Participants.** A list of any other participating members, non-members, and/or technical partners participating in the collaboration, including individual names and titles. Explain the role of each participant in the collaboration and how they are key to the effort’s success

7. **Summary.** A one-paragraph summary of the proposed collaboration. Include a vision for the products and impact of the work

12. **Network Focus Area(s).** List the network focus area(s) that this proposal addresses and provide description of how the proposed activities will advance it. Reference the Network Focus Areas section on page 2 of this RFP.

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   e. integrate procedural, distributional, structural, intergenerational equity into initiatives (e.g., explain how frontline community members will be engaged around equity principles)
   f. increase the quality and pace of project implementation, adoption, and scaling (e.g., collaboration will produce guidelines that contribute to the standardization of the GSI field)
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<td></td>
<td>amount, source, and recipient.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Example: Deliverable 1: Findings report</td>
<td>Example: January 29, 2022</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Deliverable:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Payment:</td>
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