

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY HARBOR & ESTUARY PROGRAM**

**Building Community Capacity for Climate Resiliency**

**April 5, 2023**

The New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) is requesting proposals to support disadvantaged communities seeking to advance research, planning, and/or infrastructure projects that will help build climate resiliency while addressing water quality and related management issues in those communities.

A total of \$400,000 is available under this request for proposals (RFP). HEP anticipates distributing funds through four to eight grants for projects that can be completed no later than June 30, 2025. Grant recipients must be a local government or non-profit organizations located in and/or serving disadvantaged communities as defined by HEP using criteria set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the states of New York or New Jersey, and/or HEP's 2017 - 2025 Action Agenda. See a map of eligible locations as defined by HEP's Equity Strategy [here](#).

A one-page letter of inquiry is due June 1, 2023. A webinar reviewing the content of this RFP is scheduled for May 1, 2023. Prospective applicants will be able to ask questions about this solicitation and the application process at that time. We anticipate inviting a small number of applicants submitting a letter of inquiry to complete a full proposal by July 1, 2023.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) includes the following information:

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**New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program**

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## **I. Program Background**

The New York New Jersey Harbor Estuary is a complex ecological system at the heart of the nation's largest metropolitan area. The New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) brings the benefits of the Clean Water Act to the people who live, work, and recreate on our shared waterways. Created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the request of the governors of New York and New Jersey, HEP is an ongoing collaboration to develop and implement a consensus driven plan to protect, conserve and restore the estuary. HEP decisions and activities are carried out by staff and partners organized through committees and work groups. More information about HEP and the priorities of our 2017 - 2025 Action Agenda is [here](#). The Hudson River Foundation (HRF) is the host of HEP and the Foundation will be the contracting entity for this request for proposals (RFP). HRF seeks to make science integral to decision-making regarding the Hudson River and its watershed and to support competent stewardship of this extraordinary resource.

## **II. RFP Background**

Climate change is impacting the health of the estuary and its watershed, and the people who live here. Warmer air and water temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, increases in the number and magnitude of extreme weather events like hurricanes and drought, and rising sea levels are already changing baseline conditions and affecting people and wildlife. These changes are expected to increase in the future.

To meet these challenges, federal, state, local government, and civic initiatives are advancing projects to address coastal erosion and flooding, manage stormwater and cloudburst events, and establish natural and nature-based resiliency features. These projects can also deliver important water quality, habitat, public access, and other benefits for the local community.

Incorporating community knowledge and values as an integral part of project formulation, design, implementation, and on-going monitoring and management can lead to better outcomes for these important resiliency efforts. This knowledge reflects the observations and experiences of people living in or otherwise connected to a common geographic location. This is especially important for projects located in or otherwise intending to serve disadvantaged communities, where historic and current inequities in funding, decision-making, siting of industrial and transportation facilities, and access to nature make residents especially vulnerable to climate impacts.

The recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has afforded HEP an opportunity to help address these issues through this RFP. It will help HEP address the important goals of Executive Order 14052, the Justice40 Initiative, and in keeping with HEP's own Equity Strategy.

## **III. Objectives**

Through this RFP, HEP will identify and support four to eight proposals that meet one or ideally more of the following objectives:

1. Enable disadvantaged communities in the Hudson – Raritan Estuary to fully participate in planning and decisions about coastal adaptation and other infrastructure projects being advanced by federal, state, and local agencies. Proposals that can describe how community input could be incorporated into the federal, state or local decisions or otherwise demonstrate coordination with the lead project agency are particularly encouraged. Example projects across the estuary and its watersheds could include but are not limited to the United State Army Corps of Engineer’s New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study (HATS), New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Resilient NJ initiatives for Northeastern NJ and the Raritan River and Bay Communities; New York State’s Climate Smart Communities program; the projects being advanced under the Adapt NYC planning framework including NYCDEP’s Cloudburst initiatives.
2. Advance community-initiated projects that will enhance climate resiliency, including shoreline improvements, stormwater management measures, and natural and nature-based resiliency features. We are especially interested in projects that will help communities gain access to future federal and state infrastructure funding opportunities and demonstrate how to incorporate social vulnerability of communities to make better informed decisions.
3. Address gaps in data and knowledge that will improve community and agency understanding of baseline conditions, the current and future impacts of climate change, community values, and/or the effectiveness of alternative adaptation measures and management strategies. This can include efforts to assess the state of existing knowledge as well as the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs. Projects that engage community members to participate in the co-production of required data and knowledge are especially encouraged.
4. Demonstrate the power of collaboration between community, government, independent scientists, and/or utilities. Addressing climate change requires a team effort. Proposals that engage multiple stakeholders or seek to establish successful community involvement in such partnerships are highly desired.

#### **IV. Anticipated Activities and Outputs**

Specific activities and outcomes are not prescribed. Respondents should best articulate what work is needed to meet specific community needs. Recognizing that the capacity of organizations serving disadvantaged communities is sometimes limited, this work can include necessary capacity-building efforts that will help achieve RFP objectives. Proposed activities and outcomes can stand on their own or can be a part of a larger project or campaign. Some relevant examples include but are not limited to:

- Community engagement activities including public meetings and programs, preparation of outreach and educational materials, and meeting facilitation and documentation.
- Technical assistance and communication to enhance community understanding of climate risks, proposed climate adaptation measures, and/or their impact on water quality, habitat, access to nature, and other ecosystem services.

- Monitoring and data collection, analyses, and communication of findings by professionals and/or community members.
- Planning activities including defining goals and common visions, demonstrating local needs, project identification, site assessments, design charrettes, conceptual plans, and initial (e.g., 10-30%) engineering/design drawings intended to move multiple-benefit projects towards implementation.
- Convening stakeholders to discuss community needs regarding potential climate change mitigation and adaptation projects. Supporting the development of partnerships between stakeholders and potential public and private funding sources, especially state and federal competitive grant programs with specific allocations for under-resourced communities.
- Organizational capacity building to support these and other proposed activities, including staff and other costs associated with administrative activities, board and membership support, and communications.

## V. General Guidelines for Applicants

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) status or local government entities located in or otherwise serving disadvantaged communities as defined by HEP using criteria set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the states of New York or New Jersey, and/or HEP’s 2017 - 2025 Action Agenda. See a map of eligible locations [here](#). Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may apply, but they must partner with a local government entity or another organization with 501(c)(3) status that will serve as a fiscal agent and/or play a clear leadership role for the project/proposal.

### Schedule:

Announcement of Request for Proposals	April 5, 2023
Informational Webinar	May 1, 2023
Letter of Inquiry	June 1, 2023
Invitations to Submit Full Proposals	July 1, 2023
Full Proposals Due	August 15, 2023
Projects Selected (subject to change)	September 2023
Project Period (subject to change)	Completed by June 2025
Final Report	September 2025

**Funding:** A total of approximately \$400,000 is available. HEP anticipates awarding four to eight grants of between \$50,000 - \$100,000. Please note that while proposals of up to \$100,000 are welcome, cost effectiveness and leveraging are among the scoring criteria.

Once an award is made and a contractual agreement is signed, grantees will receive an advance of 25% of the total grant. Three additional payments of 25% of the total grant will be made following submission and approval of interim reports or agreed upon deliverables and the final deliverable(s) and report. Funds can be used to support salary, fringe, travel, equipment/supplies, and professional services. Indirect costs of up to 40% of staff costs, not including fringe, are allowed. Fringe costs of up to 30% of staff costs are allowed. Requests for higher rates can be made but must be supported by a copy of the federally approved indirect rate and/or proof of use with other federal funds. Please note that this would be noted under the cost effectiveness scoring criteria. Food and construction costs are ineligible.

**Match:** No matching funds are required, but contribution of outside funds, in-kind services, or other match will be favorably reviewed and should be indicated.

**Deliverables and Conditions:** Award recipients are required to provide interim progress reports and invoices, complete the project in a timely manner, and submit a final report. Guidelines for these reports will be distributed with the grant award. Award recipients must acknowledge HEP/HRF funding using language and logos for any public presentations or printed materials.

**Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements:** If you plan to publish, post, distribute, analyze, or otherwise use data collected through monitoring or other means (including data collected previously by you or others), proposals will be required to develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that must be approved by HEP and EPA before any monitoring or data analysis can begin. A QAPP is a written plan of why, how, and where you intend to collect data; once submitted, the approval process can take two months or more. Please note that data collection or analyses conducted solely for educational purposes (no data published, posted or distributed in any manner) does not require a QAPP. HEP staff will provide technical assistance for the development of the QAPP, if needed, but be sure to allocate time and effort for QAPP preparation as part of the proposal.

### **Proposal Evaluation**

Based on criteria included in [Appendix D](#). Final decisions will be made by Hudson River Foundation staff and external advisory committee based on the scoring and other considerations such as geographic and topical distribution.

## **VI. Submission Process**

### ***Informational Webinar (May 1, 2023)***

An informational webinar will be held May 1, 2023 at 1 pm EST. Please register in advance of the webinar [here](#). You may also submit any questions about the RFP in advance of the webinar via e-mail to [rosana@hudsonriver.org](mailto:rosana@hudsonriver.org).

### ***Letter of Inquiry (due June 1, 2023)***

Prospective applicants are invited to submit a brief letter of inquiry, including the lead organization, contact information, project location, prospective partners, and a short description of proposed project. See attached form in [Appendix A](#). Please send the letter of inquiry to [rosana@hudsonriver.org](mailto:rosana@hudsonriver.org) by June 1, 2023. You will receive an email confirming your submission with the subject line "Climate LOI"

Submission Confirmation”. We may ask for meetings with individual applicants to help us better understand their letter of inquiry.

***Invitations for Full Proposals (July 1, 2023)***

We anticipate inviting a small number of applicants submitting a letter of inquiry to complete the full proposal by July 1, 2023. You must submit a letter of inquiry to be considered eligible for a full proposal.

***Full Proposal from Invited Applicants (Due August 15, 2023)***

Proposals must be submitted no later than 9:00 PM EST **August 15, 2023** to [rosana@hudsonriver.org](mailto:rosana@hudsonriver.org) as a single PDF document. The file name should be in the following format: “Building Community Capacity for Climate Resiliency RFP\_NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION”. You will receive an email confirming your submission with the subject line “Climate RFP Submission Confirmation”.

***Grant Awards (Anticipated September 15, 2023)***

HEP expects to provide award notification to applicants on or about September 15, 2023. See [Appendix D](#) for award criteria. Projects cannot start until both parties sign the contract. HEP and the Foundation reserve the right to modify, postpone or cancel this solicitation and to reject all applications.

**VII. Full Proposal Content**

Invited full proposals should not exceed the equivalent of 15 single spaced pages.

The proposal *must* include the following information:

1. **Cover Letter.** Please include a cover letter, printed on an official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the lead organization that is applying.
2. **Title Page.** The title page must adhere to the format provided in [Appendix B](#) using a maximum of one page.
  - Project Title, as it appears throughout the proposal.
  - Project Leader: Provide the name, title, affiliation and complete contact information (mailing address, phone numbers, and email address) of the individual leading the project.
  - List of partner organizations, which are those that will materially contribute to the project and will appear in the budget, receiving funding and/or providing supporting match or in-kind contribution, and the names and contact information for notable individuals, if applicable.
  - Location of project: State, city or town, and/or neighborhood address (if applicable), latitude and longitude coordinates (if applicable), and name of receiving/impacted waterbody (if applicable).
  - Project cost: total amount of funds requested and the sources and amount of federal and non-federal matching fund.
3. **Proposal Narrative.** Please start the proposal narrative on a new page. This section must not exceed eight pages and must include the following information:

- **Goals and Rationale:** Describe the issue(s) that the project will address. Summarize **why** your project is important, what you expect to accomplish, and the expected benefits of the proposed project and how they relate to any or all four objectives of this RFP.
- **Location & Community being Served by this Proposal:** Please indicate where the project will take place and **who** the project will benefit, including **your organization’s history of serving that community.**
- **Commitment to Serve and Support:** Describe how the proposed activity serves, supports, and/or broadens the participation of disadvantaged communities and/or underrepresented populations. Specify the equitable and inclusive practices that you will undertake.
- **Associated Projects and Relevant Agencies:** If your proposal is intended to inform a specific agency or municipal decision and/or resiliency plan/project/initiative, please indicate this including any specific conversations to date.
- **Workplan:** Please provide an outline of how you will accomplish this work and achieve your goal(s). This description should reference specific **Activities and Outputs that are anticipated.** Such activities and outputs could include but are not limited to: Community engagement activities; planning; technical assistance and communication; data collection, analyses, and communication of findings; and/or organizational capacity building to support these and other proposed activities. If relevant, please describe the data being collected, purpose, and monitoring methods that will be used as part of your project. Please read “Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements” on page 3 of the RFP.
- **Timeline:** Provide a detailed timeline for meeting project objectives and identified tasks and deliverables. Projects should be completed within the period identified for this RFP. All timelines should be stated in terms of Week or Month #1, #2, #4, etc. rather than specific dates. Project start dates may change based on the date an agreement is established.
- **Personnel:** Define the role of all individuals who will be involved in the project, including contractors and subcontractors, and briefly indicate their relevant experience/skills. Describe the role of partner organizations in the project and attach letters of commitment, if applicable. Note if these entities are contributing materially and are included in the budget, either as a recipient of funds or contributor of match.
- **Evaluation:** Indicate how you plan to evaluate the success of your project. Consider which outputs and outcomes (or suitable indicators) you will realistically be able to measure and how you will define success for your project. This should be in line with your project goals and results.

4. **Attachments.** Please include the following:

- **Budget Form:** Provide an itemized budget in the table format provided in Appendix C or similar format. Please indicate the source of any matching funds or in-kind services. If matching funds are included, please specify if these have been secured or are being sought, and if they are from federal or non-federal sources.
- Please include any **letters of support** from partnering organizations, including relevant government agencies, or other parties that support your proposed project. Letters of support do **not** count towards the page limit.

**APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INQUIRY - Building Community Capacity for Climate Resiliency**

**Title:**

**Project Leader:**

**Contact Information:**

**Location & Community being Served by This Proposal:**

**Prospective Partners:**

**Brief Description of Proposed Project, including project goals and anticipated activities and outcomes:**

**Anticipated Duration of Project/Activities** (No more than two years/no later than June 2025):

**Anticipated Total Cost** (Grants are anticipated to be between \$ 50,000 - \$ 100,000):

**APPENDIX B: TITLE PAGE FOR FULL PROPOSAL**

**Title:**

**Project Leader:**

**Contact Information:**

**List of Partner Organizations:**

**Location & Community being Served by this Proposal, including representative latitude and longitude:**

**Total Funds Requested from HEP: \$**

**Total matching funds: \$**

**EIN/Federal Tax Identification Number:**

**DUNS Number: <sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> a DUNS number can be obtained free at [www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html](http://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html);

**APPENDIX C: BUDGET FORM**

<b>BUDGET CATEGORY</b> <i>(Add/remove itemizing lines below major categories as necessary, but please do NOT delete major categories)</i>	<b>FUNDS REQUESTED FROM HEP</b>	<b>FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES***</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>
<b>A. PERSONNEL</b> (list individual staff member, task, and hours or % time) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>B. FRINGE BENEFITS</b> % of (e.g., 30% of total personnel costs) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>C. TRAVEL</b> (estimate number/purpose of trips below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>D. EQUIPMENT*</b> (itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>E. SUPPLIES</b> (itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>F. CONTRACTS**</b> (identify & itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>G. OTHER/SUBAWARDS**</b> (identify & itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (SUM OF A-G)</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>I. INDIRECT COSTS</b> % of (Up to 40% of total personnel costs are allowed) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>J. TOTAL PROJECT COST (SUM OF H+I)</b>	\$	\$	\$

\* Note that equipment refers to items that cost \$5,000 or more each. Items of lesser cost are considered supplies

\*\* F. Contracts refers to goods and services, generally from a for-profit vendor operating in a competitive environment, being delivered at the direction of the applicant. G Subawards refers to funding being provided through grants to non-profit or public sector entities for activities that are addressing proposal objectives.

\*\*\* Please indicate the source of any matching funds or in-kind services. If matching funds are included, please specify if these have been secured or are being sought, and if they are from federal or non-federal sources.

**APPENDIX D: EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Score: 1 = not likely, 2 = somewhat likely, 3 = likely, 4 = very likely. Maximum score: 60.

	<b>This proposal...</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Goals, Objectives, and Rationale</b>	Makes a clear case for applicant’s motivation to carry out the project.	
	References and supports relevant goals and objectives as described in the RFP.	
<b>Approach to the Project and Specific Tasks</b>	Provides a clear and well thought-out course of action, including a list of specific tasks, actions and methods.	
	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the required technical background.	
	Provides for opportunities to work with the community and sharing results of the project with stakeholders.	
	Has outputs and outcomes in line with those required in the RFP and the proposed course of action.	
<b>Ability to Meet Schedule</b>	The timeline for the identified tasks is realistic and likely to be met.	
<b>Community and Professional Merits and Relevant Experience</b>	Demonstrates organization’s historic and current connections with target community.	
	Addresses community priorities based on past public engagement efforts, and/or seeks to provide opportunities for such engagement.	
	Helps build civic and other capacity for climate leadership in an historically disadvantaged community.	
	Demonstrates project manager and/or team member’s relevant technical experience.	
	Indicates understanding and connections with relevant federal, state, and local agencies and resiliency initiatives.	
	Demonstrates commitment and support from project team and relevant stakeholders, including neighborhood associations, business and civic leadership organizations, and/or environmental groups.	
<b>Cost Effectiveness</b>	Includes a budget that is clearly presented.	
	Has costs that are reasonable and justified.	
	Provides for contribution of outside funds, in-kind services, or other match.	

