

Climate and Equity Grant Program – Frequently Asked Questions

Definitions and Background Information

How do I know if my organization is a Community-Based Organization?

Your organization is considered a Community-Based Organization (CBO) if it is a private non-profit or for-profit organization that seeks to improve a community's well-being, provides services to a community based on input from community members, has leadership and/or membership representative of the community it serves, and has existing relationships within a community prior to the start of the grant. This definition is intended to highlight organizations who are truly based in the communities they serve, rather than projects with “parachute in” or “trickle-down” effects. CBOs may be 501(c)3 organizations, religious organizations, neighborhood revitalization groups, and other non-governmental organizations. Public or quasi-public entities such as municipalities or housing authorities do not meet the definition of a CBO, but may be part of a partnership with a CBO – in this case, the CBO should be the lead applicant for the grant.

If you would like to discuss your organization with CIRCA staff to confirm eligibility, please contact mary.buchanan@uconn.edu.

What does “vulnerable community” mean in the context of this grant?

A “vulnerable community” means a population that may be disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change, including, but not limited to,

- Low- and moderate-income communities,
- [Environmental justice communities](#)
- Communities eligible for community reinvestment
- 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 (children, older adults, communities of color, and low-income communities).
- Or as further defined in consultation with community representatives

What does “community-scale project” mean in the context of this grant?

By “community-scale project”, we mean a project that is rooted in a specific place – this place could be a neighborhood, a school, the service area of a CBO, tribal lands, etc. – and that involves a group of people with a shared concern or need. Importantly, input and involvement from community members should be central to the project.

What does “capacity-building” mean in the context of this grant?

Capacity-building activities are activities that will help an organization become more effective at achieving its mission and sustaining its work into the future – such as supporting staff time, providing training or other skills development to staff members or volunteers, collaborating with other organizations and network-building, etc. These are all allowable expenses under this grant program, as long as they are associated with a larger goal of empowering vulnerable communities to mitigate, plan for, and respond to climate change impacts.

Where can I learn more about the climate risks that might impact my community and the roles of community-based organizations in addressing these risks?

- CIRCA has fact sheets on [Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding in Connecticut](#) as well as [Rising Temperatures and Precipitation in Connecticut](#).
- [AdaptCT](#) is a partnership between Connecticut Sea Grant and UConn’s Center for Land Use Education & Research (CLEAR). [This video](#) from AdaptCT presents an overview of climate change in Connecticut and the associated risks to human health and safety, as well as the difference between mitigation and adaptation.
- [The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) is a mapping tool from the Council on Environmental Quality identifying census tracts overburdened by climate risks.
- [The Climate Explorer](#) is a mapping tool from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that you can use to explore climate impacts on your area.
- The [Governor’s Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3) website has an overview of the GC3’s history and goals as well as links to associated reports.
- [Centering Equity in Climate Change Resilience Planning: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities](#), prepared for the GC3’s Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group, presents a framework for resilience planning centering those who are most vulnerable to climate change impacts. An executive summary and worksheets can be found [here](#).
- The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has an [Equity and Environmental Justice in Climate Solutions Webinar Series](#) with multiple recordings exploring how climate change affects populations at increased risk in Connecticut.
- If you have questions about how your organization’s mission and activities might connect to climate change risks and impacts, please contact mary.buchanan@uconn.edu.

Projects and Applications

What types of expenses are covered by this grant program?

Eligible costs include:

- Staff time / salary (including organization employees and/or sub-contractors)
- Materials / supplies
- Food for community events
- Travel expenses
- Participation incentives for community engagement, such as gift cards
- Stipends to partnering CBOs
- Indirect admin costs (up to 10% of total grant request)

When are grant applications due?

Applications are due 5 pm on September 30th, 2024. Please submit applications through the online form on the [CIRCA Climate and Equity grant webpage](#).

What is the range of grant amounts?

Applicants may apply on Track 1 (Small Grants) for amounts of \$2,000 - \$9,999, or on Track 2 (Large Grants) for amounts of \$10,000 - \$50,000. The goal of this two-track division is to ensure that the final grant selections include projects with a range of sizes. CIRCA expects to award grants totaling \$200,000 in this funding cycle. There is no match requirement.

What is the optional participation add-on?

The optional participation add-on is an extra amount of funding that applicants can choose to add onto their project budget to support their organization's participation in state planning meetings, like those held by the [Governor's Council on Climate Change](#) (GC3), the [Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Committee](#) (CEEJAC), or associated subcommittees. Applicants may choose either the \$2,500 (5 meetings) add-on or the \$5,000 (10 meetings) add-on.

Does the optional participation add-on count toward the award caps for Tracks 1 and 2?

No, the optional participation add-on is on top of the Track 1 and 2 award amounts. So if you are applying to Track 1 (\$2,000 - \$9,999), you could add on either \$2,500 or \$5,000, depending on whether you select the option for attending 5 meetings or 10 meetings, making your total award amount up to \$14,999. If you are applying on Track 2 (\$10,000 - \$50,000) and decide to select the optional participation add-on, your total award may be up to \$55,000 if you select the option for an extra \$5,000 / 10 meetings. This add-on is so that the grant program can support increased participation from CBOs in state planning efforts without taking away from the rest of the project budgets.

Is application evaluation affected by the optional participation add-on?

Applicants who choose the optional participation add-on will receive a bonus +2 points on their application evaluation rubric. This works like extra credit in school – it can give you a small boost, but it is still entirely possible to do well without it.

What do I need to do to choose the optional participation add-on?

When you fill out the online application, there will be a box to check if you want to choose the optional participation add-on. If you choose the \$2,500 add-on, someone from your organization should plan to attend 5 meetings over the grant period. If you choose the \$5,000 add-on, someone from your organization should plan to attend 10 meetings over the grant period. It does not have to be the same person from your organization attending all the meetings, as long as someone from your organization attends. Your organization should keep track of which meetings you attend, and include that information in your final grantee report. If you select one of the add-on participation options, please make sure you include it as a line item in your project budget. A template budget is provided on [CIRCA's Climate and Equity Grant webpage](#).

What if I want to choose the optional participation add-on, but I don't know what state planning meetings are happening or when/where they happen?

- Information about meetings and notices for the Governor's Council on Climate Change meetings can be found [here](#). (More of these will be added in upcoming months.)
- Information about the meetings of the GC3 Working Groups can be found [here](#). (More of these will be added in upcoming months.)
- Information about upcoming meetings of the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council can be found [here](#).
- **Updated September 16th: The CEEJAC meeting held on September 16th included a presentation by Rebecca French about upcoming public engagement related to the development of Connecticut's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan. Meetings held as part of the CCAP planning process will count for the optional participation add-on, and we encourage prospective grantees to plan to attend these. A recording of this presentation is available under the Past CEEJAC Meetings – September 16th meeting materials [here](#).**
- If there are other state meetings you would like to attend or want to ask about, please contact mary.buchanan@uconn.edu

How long is the grant period?

The grant period is one year, from January – December 2025.

What deliverables are expected at the end of the grant period?

Grantees are expected to prepare a brief final report at the end of the grant period summarizing project activities and outcomes as well as a brief account of project expenditures. A report

template will be provided. Additional deliverables will vary by project and should be indicated in the project work plan. Possible additional deliverables may include community climate action or resilience plans, workshops, presentations of lessons learned and next steps, etc. Grantees who choose the optional add-on funding for participation in state planning meetings should include a record of attendance at these meetings in their final report. Acknowledgement shall be given to CIRCA on any final products and presentations using information and guidance [here](#), and to DEEP as the funding agency. CIRCA reserves the right to edit the final report or other products for publishing on the CIRCA website and/or including in print materials.

What are some examples of “a well-defined and measurable goal”?

Examples of project goals may include but are not limited to:

- Create a community climate action or resilience plan with specific recommendations
- Attend a specific number of training sessions or GC3 meetings
- Hold a specific number of outreach or educational events
- Create outreach materials tailored to a specific community
- Create a demonstration site or other public education product

What are some examples of projects that this grant program might fund?

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to (this list is an expanded version of the list in the Request for Applications):

- Develop a climate action or climate resilience plan for the CBO or the community
- Participate in staff or volunteer training for climate planning, mitigation, or adaptation
- Participate in GC3 or other climate-related state planning initiatives
 - **Updated September 16th:** Please see the presentation by Rebecca French at the September 16th CEEJAC meeting (this recording can be found under Past CEEJAC meetings [here](#)) for information about upcoming public engagement opportunities for the state Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.
- Community outreach, education, and awareness campaigns related to climate risks or climate actions (documentary series, community classes, creation of educational materials, etc.)
- Outreach to connect community members to existing resources for climate adaptation and/or mitigation activities (for example, weatherization for buildings; preparing for heat waves, storms, and floods, including impacts like power outages; energy efficiency and savings measures; and accessing solar and heat pumps)
- Create a demonstration site for public education about adaptation or mitigation techniques (rain barrels; gardens; shade trees; bus, bike, scooter, or walking routes; energy efficient homes, electric vehicles, etc.)
- Planting trees / greening urban areas (along with community engagement)
- Community-driven cultural asset mapping to inform a neighborhood resilience plan
- Build-a-bike workshops and other projects to increase carbon-neutral mobility
- Develop a proposal for an adaptation/mitigation project to later seek additional funds, such as a state or federal grant

What is included in a complete application?

A complete application includes:

- A. Organization information, contact information, and grant request amount
- B. Brief questionnaire for tracking progress toward the goals of the Climate Funders Justice Pledge (this does not affect eligibility but will be considered during evaluation)
- C. Narrative document as described in the Request for Applications
- D. Budget document as described in the Request for Applications

What are you looking for in each part of the application?

Descriptions of what we're looking for in each section of the application can be found in the explainer document on [CIRCA's Climate and Equity Grant webpage](#).

Do I need to include letters of support?

Letters of support are not required but may be helpful to strengthen your application, particularly if you are partnering with other organizations. Letters may be included in the narrative document PDF, or emailed to mary.buchanan@uconn.edu before the application deadline.

How will applications be evaluated?

There is a two-stage process for evaluating applications. CIRCA staff will review every application received and will evaluate each application based on the scoring rubric below. The top-scoring applications will then be reviewed by an external grants advisory committee, who will select the final grantees. During the final evaluation by the grants advisory committee, the scoring rubric included in the RFA will be considered alongside additional factors such as diversity of geographic location, diversity of organization leadership, and diversity of project size. DEEP staff will provide review and comment on the selected projects before any awards are announced. Written feedback may be provided to unsuccessful applicants upon request.

Notification and Awards

When will I find out if I've been awarded a grant?

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by early November 2024. Please check spam folders if you do not see an email.

How are grant funds distributed?

The funding structure for this grant will be flexible to match the needs of the project, although University of Connecticut award procedures must be followed by all entities selected to receive funds. Projects that involve regular staff time or attending trainings may receive the funds in the form of a monthly stipend, while projects that require expenditures upfront may receive up to 25% of the total grant award as an advance, with additional funding at later project milestones. Grantees will be expected to provide an accounting of expenditures before additional funds can

be released. In cases where grant funds are spent on community meetings or events, grantees should count attendance and include attendance numbers in their final report. CIRCA staff will work with grantees and the UConn Procurement Office to set payment terms at the time of award and to provide guidance throughout the grant period. Participants must submit a W-9 form to receive payment, which is a tax form used by the IRS to confirm a person/organization's identity so that they can receive payment. The form must list a tax identification number, which could be an employer identification number (EIN) for a business or a social security number (SSN) for an individual. A W-9 form looks like [this](#).

Have other questions?

Additional or more detailed questions can be directed to Mary Buchanan, Community Resilience Planner at CIRCA, at mary.buchanan@uconn.edu