

“Climate-Smart Municipalities: Modeling Integrated Energy Communities for the 21st Century in Minnesota and Germany”

Request for proposals from MN municipalities. Application deadline: March 31, 2016

Opportunity: Accelerate your community’s pathway to a cleaner and more efficient energy footprint by partnering with an award-winning climate-smart community in Germany that wants to go even farther by learning with and from you.

The University of Minnesota and the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) invite you to apply to a unique three-year program. Eligible are municipalities of any size from anywhere in Minnesota. There is space for three to four communities. Those selected will travel to Germany to tour sites that model integrated solutions, learn with their MN cohort and German experts, and work with their community twin to accelerate their MN community’s pathway to a cleaner and more efficient energy footprint. The selected communities will share their progress and insights at conferences and community events in Minnesota. They will also have the benefit of working with their NRW twin community while a delegation of NRW municipalities and leaders visits Minnesota each fall.

Who should apply?

Municipalities anywhere in Minnesota and of any size with any of the following characteristics

- You are planning to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures
- You are facing a real energy related infrastructure need and need to develop comprehensive solutions that improve your city’s entire system
- You are trying to fix a water contamination problem and see an energy dimension in that issue
- You have developed a clean energy or GHG emissions reduction plan for your community and want to implement projects
- You are a member of the Green Step Cities program and want to accelerate your community’s transition to a cleaner energy footprint
- You want to explore energy solutions together with your area’s farms

Rationale:

Municipalities of all sizes will be key players in the next decade’s rush to reposition the world community so that collectively we may win this century’s climate challenge. The recent COP21 climate talks in Paris underline the urgency for simultaneous action at both the policy and implementation levels. Communities are at the nexus of impacts. They are also the location for comprehensive solutions.

The program *“Climate-Smart Municipalities: Modeling Integrated Energy Communities for the 21st Century in Minnesota and Germany”* taps and develops energy expertise in Minnesota and the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) to model what communities of different sizes, with specific micro-economies and distinct local government structures can do to reduce their carbon footprints while assuring economic prosperity. Economic growth, recent data suggests, no longer is inextricably tied to increasing emissions.

The emphasis is on systems—the municipality as a complex economic and social system and energy as a key element for comprehensive sustainability practice.

At the program's center are 8-10 municipalities in Minnesota and NRW. Selected competitively and paired as non-identical twins, they will move at different speeds and in different national contexts but learn together and from each other. Each municipal pair will be linked to research capacity at the University of Minnesota and a regional research institution in NRW to enable expert analysis and to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines in the community's effort to transform itself. To tap and make visible the role of business and the private sector in reducing any community's carbon footprint, the communities in MN will be linked to appropriate private sector partners. Connections between electrical generation and thermal output, between waste management and energy, and between agricultural production and energy are of interest. Education and a communications strategy involve local citizens and students. Finally, the communities' strategies and data collected over the project's three year run will provide key information for future efforts to scale up comprehensive sustainable energy initiatives in municipalities across Minnesota and NRW.

Climate-smart Municipalities Program elements:

Element #1 collaborative workshop-study tour for MN municipal leaders and stakeholders to NRW to meet with partner communities and experts

A one-week intensive seminar and fact-finding study tour will expose the delegation to state-of-the art examples in NRW that demonstrate how to integrate sustainable strategies and achieve maximum value for the community and local economy. Each selected municipality participates annually with two representatives. An additional seat will be made available for a state legislator from the district.

Element #2 tailored work programs established by partnered municipalities and connected to research at U of M and NRW research institutions

Each twinned community will establish and work through a catalogue of measures and actions to reduce the community's carbon footprint and achieve resilience and economic benefits. Communities will conduct regular virtual meetings to exchange notes and updates.

Element #3 forum events in Minnesota to share information and learning with broad community

Presentations by program municipalities at 2-3 regional stakeholder conferences.

Element #4 Study tour for NRW partner community leaders and experts to Minnesota

A matching one-week intensive workshop-study tour for a delegation from Germany that includes time for the twinned communities to work together and strengthen the cooperative relationship between the twinned communities.

The program will be run with these elements each year for three years (2016, 2017, and 2018).

What is expected of the participating municipalities?

- You commit to being fully engaged over the program's three year run time and participate in all elements at the leadership level
- You are willing to mentor other MN communities
- You are committed to accelerating your community's clean energy transition and will create a plan with benchmarks
- You are eager to tap expertise and technical help from partners
- You will provide funds to cover your two community representatives' airfare to Germany. Estimated transatlantic airfare during summer is \$1,800/person.

Ready to join a cohort of like-minded municipal leaders from Minnesota who want to model an integrated systems approach to energy and sustainability? Apply by March 31, 2016

Application materials (required)

1. application form (attached)
2. two-page description of the climate-smart project you hope to undertake as a community in partnership with a German community from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Competitive proposals spell out a vision and emphasize how your community connects different aspects of the energy challenge in order to achieve synergies. Competitive proposals also include efforts to build broad community support. For helpful background information, watch what the rural city of Saerbeck (Germany) is doing. [TPT 's Integrated Energy Solutions](#). Saerbeck is a program partner.
3. a statement on support that covers these requirements:
 - your city will make available funding for two members of the city's leadership to participate in the summer delegation to Germany in each of the three project years;
 - your city will conduct regular virtual meetings with the municipal project twin in Germany;
 - your city will connect with experts and researchers at the University of Minnesota to accelerate your community's progress toward a lower carbon footprint;
 - your city will share findings and experiences with other MN communities at MN forum events;
 - your city will designate one individual to provide continuity across all three project years and participate in each year's delegation.
4. copy of sustainability plan (if you have one)

Complete applications are to be sent in electronic form and with the subject line "2016 Climate-Smart Municipalities application—YOUR COMMUNITY's NAME" to the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment, c/o Dr. Sabine Engel at ENGEL056@umn.edu

DECISIONS ON ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM will be available on April 29, 2016.

For expressions of interest or questions, please email or call Sabine Engel, program director for intl. energy policy and cooperation, at 612-624-3939 or ENGEL056@umn.edu

This program is an international collaboration between the University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment and the Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Consumer Protection of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia. Program partners include MN state agencies, MN nonprofits, MN businesses, and economic development entities in Minnesota and North Rhine-Westphalia. In 2013, the state of Minnesota and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia signed an agreement to cooperate on renewable energy and energy efficiency. That framework agreement enables Germany's NRW to partner with the University of Minnesota.

(NOTE: This program is contingent on anchor funding from Germany. A final decision on that anchor funding is expected by the end of March).