



REQUEST FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Community
Application

The UniverCity program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is looking for local government partners.

**Could this be your community? We can create
BETTER PLACES TOGETHER**

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE UNIVERCITY PROGRAM?

The UniverCity Year program is a partnership between UW–Madison and Wisconsin communities.

The concept is simple. Community partners identify projects that would benefit from UW–Madison expertise. Faculty from across the university incorporate these projects into their courses, and UniverCity staff provide administrative support to ensure a successful collaboration.

The results are powerful. Partners receive big ideas and feasible recommendations that spark momentum toward a more sustainable, livable, and resilient future.

WHAT DO WE BRING TO COMMUNITIES?

UW–Madison faculty, staff, and students are eager to help local governments think creatively about issues happening in cities, counties, towns, villages, school districts, or quasi-governmental agencies. The UniverCity program has the capacity to match local issues with upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses and several hundred hours of supervised student time.

Our partners have chosen to address broad issues facing their communities, like sustainability, diversity, economic development, education, social services, health, and housing.

Some of the deliverables students have produced include: a mental health media campaign, recommendations to improve childcare opportunities, strategies for harvesting blue-green algae, affordable housing plans, best practices for criminal justice reform, and ways to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Experienced UniverCity staff will guide the partnership every step of the way. We will work with you to write a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our campus and your municipality, define the scope, manage logistics, coordinate media relations, troubleshoot, and generally take care of setting up, running, promoting, and evaluating the effort. We are here to make the partnership as successful and as easy as possible.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF COMMUNITIES?

A successful UniverCity collaboration requires the local government partner to identify a partnership lead – usually a senior staff person directly accountable to the local government's executive – who supervises and coordinates the partner's participation. This person also oversees the process of identifying key issues and assigns government staff to support individual projects. Applicants should invite local organizations, businesses, and non-profits to help envision and plan UniverCity Year projects. We strongly encourage projects that address social justice. [Local Extension staff](#) could be a good resource for developing your application.

WHAT WILL THIS COST COMMUNITIES?

To help offset the program's operational costs, the local government partner must make a financial commitment to the effort. The typical cost is approximately \$5,000–\$10,000 per project. The community must indicate under "Financial Contribution" below how much it can contribute to the partnership.

We can help you apply for grants or solicit donors to help fund this effort.

REQUIRED DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT

For an application to be considered, the community must demonstrate organizational support for the application in one of two ways:

1. **Resolution:** We **strongly encourage** that communities adopt a resolution through its governing body authorizing the submission of an application to the UniverCity program to ensure awareness and buy-in from elected officials. UniverCity staff are happy to present at a Council/Board meeting and can also provide template resolution language based on examples from past partners.

-OR-

2. **Letter of Support:** Include a letter of support with signatories from both an elected official (e.g., mayor, city/county/village/town board/council member) and professional staff (e.g., administrator, department heads) indicating their willingness to help support the project financially and with staff time. Describe collaboration with local organizations for this project. Communities are welcome to submit more than one letter, but it is not expected.

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS EVALUATED?

While this is not a competitive application process and it is highly unlikely that community applicants will not be selected as a UniverCity partner, staff have found that applications which have resulted in the most successful partnerships include:

TOP-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND CAPACITY:

The city/county manager or administrator, mayor, elected officials, and department managers indicate a willingness to involve UniverCity program staff and provide resources. There is sufficient staff capacity to successfully engage in a multi-year partnership with numerous projects and to carry work forward at the end of the collaboration.

LIKELIHOOD OF MATCH WITH COURSES:

Projects are within the capability of UW-Madison faculty and students and involve rigorous research or technical needs.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: Projects directly relate to the community's short-term and long-term strategic goals, as embodied in a strategic plan, work plan, sustainability plan, policies, programs, etc.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION: The financial contribution indicates that the community is committed to and values the partnership.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION: Projects reflect efforts to collaborate with local organizations to envision, plan, and shape a shared future.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES: Projects that explore making communities a place for all people to thrive.

TYPICAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

These estimates are based on average timelines for past projects. These are just approximations, and timelines may be shorter or longer based on when the application is received, the nature and complexity of the projects identified, and other factors.

Given that the UniverCity program operates on an academic calendar, applications received January through March may take longer to match with the following fall semester courses. If you have questions about the best time to apply based on your community's needs, please contact UniverCity Alliance staff at UniverCityAlliance@wisc.edu.



ROLLING DEADLINE: Applications received by UniverCity staff.

1- 3 MONTHS: UniverCity program staff and local government staff meet to deeply discuss the scope of work and final deliverables for each project.

2-6 MONTHS (depending on when the application is received relative to the academic calendar): UniverCity program staff match projects to faculty and courses for the upcoming semester.

8-9 MONTHS (depending on the number and nature of the projects): Classes work on UniverCity projects.

FOR UP TO ONE YEAR AFTER PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED (depending on the needs of the community): UniverCity program staff and faculty provide follow-up assistance for project implementation.

ANNUALLY: The UniverCity program publishes a report summarizing projects and recommendations.

TESTIMONIALS

"UniverCity Year is important because it brings that experience at UW-Madison ... right down to the local community and says, 'Here's what's possible.'"

– Mike Olson
President and CEO, Bank of Brodhead

"To do that kind of work on such diverse, different topics would have never been done at the county level without being a part of UniverCity."

– Dave Mack,
Program Manager, Marathon County
Conservation, Planning & Zoning Department

"We see this as an opportunity to bring resources to issues that have been identified by our communities in their comprehensive plans and other planning processes, but without funding or staff, have been delayed."

– Cara Carper
Former Executive Director
Green County Development Corporation

"There is benefit not just to a county looking for assistance with projects ... but for our future workforce as well by students gaining practical experience they're going to see in the real world, that they may not see in the classroom."

– Phil Rentmeester
Director,
Marathon County Emergency Management

"We have moved the needle on some of the most important work that we need to do that often gets buried under the day-to-day grind."

– Todd Schmidt
Village of Waunakee Administrator

PHOTO CREDITS
Cover: University of Wisconsin-Madison
Page 4: Patrick Bodell

APPLICATION

The UniverCity Year program is flexible to the needs of its local government partners. Partnerships can range from a small number of rapid response projects to a multi-year collaboration. Applicants are encouraged to contact UniverCity program staff before applying. We are also available to visit your community to discuss the UniverCity program with local government leaders.

Applicant Community

Website Address

Primary Contact Person

Contact Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Secondary Contact Person

Contact Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Financial Contribution

Identify how much the community can contribute toward this partnership.

\$

Demonstration of Support Attached

(At least one is required, check all that apply)

- Resolution approved by governing body (strong recommended)
- Letter(s) of support including at least one elected official and one professional staff member

PROPOSED PROJECTS

Please identify and provide brief descriptions of projects you are hoping to accomplish through a partnership with UniverCity. Projects do not need to be finalized, but they should reflect a coherent idea, explain the questions you would like to have answered, and provide a brief background about the issue. There is no minimum or maximum number of projects that communities can propose, so please list as many as you would like and feel free to attach additional sheets as necessary.

Questions to think about for brief project descriptions:

1. What questions are you trying to answer?
2. What added value are you expecting?
3. What do you want to do with the expected final deliverable?
4. Are there any existing plans, reports, or other documents that are relevant to the project?

Proposed Projects:

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