

National Urban Initiatives Competition **Applicant Package**

In anticipation of the Congressional interest in new and creative urban initiatives and the need for the national administration's attention to the domestic agenda, Clark University (Worcester, MA), Community Development Training Institute (Newport, RI), Freddie Mac (Washington, DC), University of Massachusetts Amherst (Amherst, MA) and the National Community Development Association are seeking the submission of proposal abstracts to a *National Urban Initiatives Competition*.

We are seeking proposal abstracts that have practicality, creativity and are well rooted in theory. Proposal abstracts should translate from theory to model or vice versa. For example, an exemplary existing project or activity can be transformed or explained by a generic model that is well rooted in theory. Furthermore, it should be feasible to enact into new legislation. This is neither a purely academic exercise nor a best practice competition. Although we are seeking proposals for the domestic urban agenda, we recognize that non-domestic research, literature, projects and activities proposed--especially in developing countries--may be relevant and such innovations are encouraged to the extent they represent potentially viable models for the U.S..

Proposal abstracts will be accepted in each of the following categories: 1) affordable and sustainable housing, 2) neighborhood based economic development, and 3) financial services to low income communities. An award of **\$20,000** will be given to winners in each of the three categories. There will also be three \$2,500 cash awards given to the second place winners of each category. Total awards will amount to over **\$65,000**.

The process is simple and it is designed to be both fair and relatively easy compliance with competition guidelines while maintaining high academic integrity. Among the award criteria the key ones are creatively balanced with utility. A two-step competitive process will be followed so that extensive work is not necessary prior to an initial screening of proposal abstracts.

Eligible Applicants

All applicants must include an institution of higher education (this includes junior colleges), which must team with one or more of a local government entity and/or a non-profit organization. Teams partially comprised of students are encouraged. Examples of applicant partnerships are the following:

- An institution of higher education & a local government entity
- An institution of higher education & a non-profit organization
- An institution of higher education, a local government entity & a non-profit organization

Schedule

2007

- RFP/Call for Papers will be issued in September

2008

- Submission of Step I Proposal Abstracts will be due by January 25
- Step I of judging will be completed February 1 to March 14
- Applicants will be notified of Step I decisions by March 15
- Submission of the finalists' full Step II Papers will be due by June 30
- Final judging will be completed July 1 to July 31
- The three winners and second place winners will be announced by August 1
- The three winners will give a presentation at an award ceremony which will take place at Clark University on September 19, in conjunction with a daylong *National Urban Initiatives Conference*.

Evaluation

The evaluation process will be a two-step process. For Step I there will be a desk review by selected experts in the field of community development. These screeners will cull the proposal abstracts down to three finalists in each category. For Step II of judging, national experts will be empanelled. This panel of judges will make the final decisions and there will be no appeal process of their decisions. Judges are permitted to reject all abstracts and/or all Step II Papers, based on the evaluation criteria.

Judges

For Step I there will be four judges (depending on the numbers of submitted proposal abstracts there may be two sets of four judges). For Step I the judges will include one judge from Community Development Training Institute or the National Community Development Association, one judge from Clark University or the University of Massachusetts Amherst and one judge from Freddie Mac. For Step II of judging, a panel of nationally recognized experts will be formed and announced prior to Step II of the judging. These judges will also be invited to participate in the award ceremony and a daylong *National Urban Initiatives Conference*, which will take place at Clark University on September 19, 2008. The winning policy papers will be presented at the conference. The successful applicants can reimburse their conference travel cost from the monetary award(s).

Judging Criteria

Both steps of the competition will be evaluated based on the following:

1. Originality/creativity
2. Logic of position/theory
3. Quality of research (including evidence of innovation, review of literature and best practices, general theoretical basis and support for argument)
4. Practicality/utility—a policy that could be easily translated into Federal or State legislation and ultimately programmatic implementation
5. Financial feasibility for legislative implementation
6. Range of participants (e.g. professors, students, city officials, non-profit board members, etc.)
7. Qualifications of team
8. Quality of overall proposal abstract
9. Consistency with the United States Conference of Mayors' "10 point plan" as found at http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/documents/10-PointPlan.pdf

Submission Guidelines

Format

- All sections of the proposal abstract are to be on 8 ½ x 11-inch letter size paper and with one-inch margins
- 1.5 spaced, printed two sided
- Page breaks for separate sections
- Pages numbered sequentially (including attachments)
- Microsoft Word Format or Rich Text Format (RTF) in no less than 12 pt. font
- One original, unbound and not stapled and four stapled or bound hard copies are to be submitted
- One electronic copy on labeled memory stick (this will not be returned)
- Cover page should include team members/titles/affiliations, descriptive proposal abstract title, date
- A self addressed and stamped postcard which will be returned upon receipt of proposal abstract

Submission of Proposal Abstract

- All proposal abstracts are to be mailed to the following address:

Clark University
IDCE
Community Development and Planning Program
950 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01610-1477
ATTN: Dr. Mark Tigan

- Proposal abstracts that are incomplete, late or do not adhere to the guidelines will not be entered into competition
- Notification will be given when proposal abstracts are received and all applicants will be given notice of Step I decisions
- All proposal abstracts must be received or postmarked by January 25, 2008

Proposal Phasing-Abstract

Step I (preliminary screening stage) proposal abstracts shall include the following:

- **Transmittal letter**
- **Title page**—proposal abstract title, date, names of team members and their contact information including their title, organization, address, phone, fax and e-mail
- **Table of contents**
- **Key words**—words that will help readers search for your published proposal abstract or information on your topic within your proposal abstract
- **Proposal summary**—short description that outlines the proposal abstract (concept, project, paper) and addresses the proposal abstract evaluation criteria with a 3,000 word limit
- **Draft table of contents for final paper**
- **Letter of commitment**—a commitment letter signed by all team members to demonstrate their commitment to the project; that one or members of the team will attend the award ceremonies on September 18 and 19, 2008 **if 1st or 2nd awardees**; that the awardees will advance the conference travel cost, but those costs can be reimbursed by the amount of award; that acknowledges the rights of Clark University and/or the University of Massachusetts Amherst to publish all or portions of the submission with proper attribution to the applicant(s)
- **Resume/CV and other qualifications of team members**-a tax identification number for all entities must be included (limit each total qualifications to no more than 10 pages)

Step II (full and final paper stage) shall include the following:

- **Transmittal letter**
- **Title page**
- **Affirmation that the applicant team has not changed**
- **Project abstract** (one 8 ½ x 11 page)
- **Letter of commitment** (notice that the letter of commitment submitted in Step I remains valid)
- **Adjusted table of contents**
- **Adjusted key words**

- **Finalized paper**—paper that conveys in full the following: objectives, theoretical basis, rationale, method/implementation strategy, implementation plan that includes a timetable and a financially feasible budget, model/demonstration that shows the functions of each potential player and how these forecast functions are to be carried out, draft of legislation, an evaluation component with benchmarks which can be employed to monitor the potential effects/benefits of legislation and literature/work cited estimated length not to exceed 30 pages excluding attachments and qualifications
- **Publishing rights**—a signed notice that Clark University and/or University of Massachusetts Amherst have the right to publish all or portions of the submittals with proper attribution to the applicant authors
- **Resubmission of resume/CV and other qualifications of team members**-a tax identification number for all entities must be included (limit each total qualifications to no more than 10 pages)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q & A

As of December 24, 2007

Q. When is the deadline?

A. The Step I Proposal Abstracts will be due by January 25, 2008 and the submission of the finalists' full Step II Papers will be due by June 30, 2008.

Q. Who is the competition open to?

A. Team members can be from anywhere, including outside the U.S. However, there must be at least one participant from the U.S. and the Step I Proposal Abstracts and Step II Papers must be an initiative suitable for the U.S.

Q. Are there any restrictions on how the award is spent?

A. There are no restrictions on how the award is spent, however, 1st and 2nd awardees will be expected to pay their own travel costs (and per diem), all of which can be reimbursed from the awarded funding.

Q. Are there a minimum or maximum number of participants on a collaborative team?

A. There are not a minimum or maximum number of participants on a collaborative team. However, at least one applicant must represent an institution of higher education (this includes junior colleges), which must team with one or more of a local government entity and/or a non-profit organization. Teams partially comprised of students are encouraged.

Q. Would a metropolitan regional economic development strategy opposed to a specifically neighborhood based strategy qualify?

A. Yes. The Step I Proposal Abstracts and Step II Papers do not have to be neighborhood based.

Q. Is a 501c3 or 4 considered an eligible applicant?

A. Either a 501c3 or 4 is fine, as long as a university is included in the team. However, the Federal ID number must be included.

Q. Would landscape architecture designs for affordable housing sites qualify for the competition?

A. Yes.

Q. Would Pennsylvania's Keystone Opportunity Zone Community & Economic Development Program be an appropriate submission?

A. Yes.

Q. Would a homeless prevention program, that assists low income families to stay in their community, with their children staying in their local school, be an appropriate submission?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the *National Urban Initiatives Conference* open to the public?

A. The *National Urban Initiatives Conference* to be held September 19 (with a networking get-together on the evening of September 18) will include a presentation and award ceremony for the *National Urban Initiatives Competition* winners. Finalists, judges, nationally recognized experts and mayors will be invited

to the award ceremony and conference. The public will be invited, subject to capacity of Clark University's facilities.

- Q. Would the project/idea be disqualified if it was a recipient of another award or was previously published?
- A. No, provided the submission(s) can be published, with attribution, by Clark University and/or the University of Massachusetts—Amherst.
- Q. Would a proposal that develops and tests an urban theory of community revitalization, which draws from two cases, be of interest or would it be more appropriate to focus on a single case/context?
- A. The “urban policy” concept arising from one or more case studies (in other words, it does not matter if the proposal draws from one or two, subject to judges’ opinions based on competitive criteria) must be translatable into a legislative initiative.
- Q. Is the purpose here to write an urban policy initiative that may/will then be implemented? Or, are you looking for an evaluation of a specific program/initiative and then a strategic urban policy recommendation based on that evaluation?
- A. Under the guidelines, either one is eligible. In other words, the paper can describe a theoretical /practical 'concept' or describe a model initiative that has worked. In fact, a model initiative that did not work but is theoretically redesigned, would even meet the threshold eligibility.
- Q. Would I be eligible for this competition as a student or would I need someone from within my department to represent this proposal?
- A. A student can be the principal investigator. In other words, a professor does not need to be the principle investigator. However, on the student's behalf, the school would have to be a co-applicant with a local government or non-profit.
- Q. Does the institution of higher education have to be the lead applicant?
- A. The institution of higher education only has to be a co-applicant. In other words, a local government entity or a non-profit organization can be the lead applicant.
- Q. Is the award to carry out the project or is the award for recognition of a successful project already completed and to be used in any way?
- A. The award is for the best idea/concept/project/activity that fits the competitive criteria. There are no restrictions on how the award is spent, however, 1st and 2nd awardees will be expected to pay their own travel costs (and per diem), all of which can be reimbursed from the awarded funding. There may be some tax implications, check with your CPA.
- Q. Could you provide a definition for "sustainable housing" for the category of "Sustainable and Affordable Housing"?
- A. We are interpreting this very broadly, employing contemporary definitions. In general, this includes 'green' factors and/or affordability provisions that withstand the test of time. Applications will not be ruled out if "sustainable" is defined otherwise, or suggests new standards as part of the 'creative' component.
- Q. Can Clark University and/or the University of Massachusetts-Amherst students and/or professors apply to the National Urban Initiatives Competition?
- A. To avoid an apparent conflict of interest, teams that include Clark University and /or the University Massachusetts-Amherst students and/or professors cannot be applicants. However, a Clark University

and/or UMass-Amherst student and/or a professor who is part of another team or whose applicants are from another university will be eligible to participate in the competition.

Q. There is nothing in the application package that states that winning teams must implement their proposals. Is this correct?

A. Winning proposals do not have to be implemented. However, the proposals will be partially judged on feasibility of implementation.

Q. I need to understand more fully the role of the university and what exact actions the university should take. Does someone from the university only need to submit a resume?

A. The institution of higher education entity, usually a Department (could be evidenced by Chair's memo/note/letter or Principal Investigator (PI) memo/note/letter) within the college/university, or the grants/dean offices must authorize the application as at least one team partner.

Q. For submitting an electronic copy, rather than using a memory stick, can a CD be used?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the sponsors of the competition allow for colleges/universities to deduct overhead?

A. We do not prohibit nor require colleges/universities from taking indirect/overhead. It is the applicant teams' decision.

Q. May we add team members, if our proposal makes it to the second phase of the competition?

A. Teams may alter team members between Step I and Step II of judging, however, one college/university member must stay in the team makeup; a weakened qualifications set, resulting in team shifts, will adversely effect competitiveness; however, we generally discourage team reformations and since mixing two teams, both of which have made it successfully through Step I, will give the appearance of limiting competition. These team reconnoiters will not be permitted.

Q. May we contact you by phone?

A. No, we are limiting our contact to e-mails in case any new issues come up. We have to use applicants' questions and our answers to update the Q & A portion of the applicant package on the web page, so applicants have fair and equal access to the competitive criteria and rules. We will answer questions by e-mail very quickly.

Q. Is the length of the resume/CV section limited to 10 pages for each team member's resume/CV or is the length of the resume/CV section limited to 10 pages for all team members' resumes/CVs?

A. The total length of the resume/CV section is limited to 10 pages.

Q. Is it necessary to identify which category our proposal abstract should be considered in or will the judges determine the category?

A. Please identify which category best suits your proposal abstract. However, the judges may switch categories for a proposal abstract if they think it is more suitable in another category.