

Request for Proposals: Exploratory Scenario Planning Grant

I. Background

Western Lands and Communities (WLC), a joint program between the Sonoran Institute and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, is seeking communities interested in using exploratory scenario planning to assist in a planning or community decision-making process that engages multiple stakeholders. Topics could include issues such as water resources, energy, and climatic variability or change, as well as how these issues may relate to land use planning or community futures.

Exploratory scenario planning is a creative, long-term planning method that can be used within a community's traditional planning processes to develop and implement plans, strategies, and actions in a manner that will help the community to be more resilient under an uncertain future. Exploratory scenarios are focused on what might occur in the future rather than value based visions of a desired future. Exploratory scenarios are created by anticipating the range of uncertainty about the future for forces and trends external to the community's control that may impact the community in the future. Using this anticipated range of possible future conditions, a set of plausible future scenarios is created. Policy decisions or actions the community is considering are then assessed against these plausible futures to understand how they may affect the ability of the community to achieve their desired goals or visions for the future. Using this assessment, strategies and actions can be identified that anticipate threats and opportunities for achieving the community's goals that may occur as the future unfolds.

In multi-stakeholder exploratory scenario planning, representatives of all the stakeholders are assembled to participate in the scenario building and assessment effort. In the multi-stakeholder setting, an important secondary result is the social learning, development of a common language for discussing the focus issue, and achieving alignment regarding the nature of the issue.

Although there are many examples of planning projects that involve multiple stakeholders, community-wide participation and/or controversial issues, planning processes that combine all of these characteristics are difficult to find. Examples of exploratory scenario planning projects incorporating some of the components of the type of projects sought by this RFP include:

- Phoenix Sonoran Preserve Plan. The City of Phoenix was uncertain about the rate of growth and the effectiveness of different funding and acquisitions methods in a large north Phoenix desert and mountain preserve. The majority of targeted lands were State Trust Land, but significant areas of private lands were also targeted. To address the uncertainty, the City explored 65 different scenarios of growth, funding sources, and acquisitions methods and from the scenario assessment developed key guidelines for planning the Sonoran Preserve. More information is available here:

<https://www.phoenix.gov/parks/trails/locations/sonoran-preserve>

- Rising Waters. The purpose of this project was to strengthen the preparedness and adaptive capacity of the Hudson River Estuary Watershed to meet the impacts of climate change. More information is available here:
http://www.nature.org/media/newyork/rw_070509_exec.pdf
- The Futures Project of the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly. In this project the goal was to engage the local communities and decision makers in a dialogue about water resources. This process outlined numerous future scenarios describing futures that might occur based upon plausible variations in the externally imposed environments or our human caused behaviors. More information is available here:
<http://www.waterassembly.org/futuresproject.htm>
- The Valley Futures project in California's Central Valley. The purpose of which was to raise public awareness of how decisions being made today lead to different outcomes that impact quality of life in California's Central Valley, and how altering the current decision making process can change these outcomes. More information is available here:
<http://farmland.org/programs/states/futureisnow/default.asp>

II. Purpose

The purpose of this project is to further develop the use of exploratory scenario planning in existing or proposed community-wide, multi-stakeholder long-term planning efforts within the context of uncertain futures and controversial issues.

III. Examples of community scenario planning projects

WLC has completed two community scenario planning projects which include 1) incorporating exploratory scenario planning into a General Plan update for the Town of Sahuarita, Arizona and 2) using exploratory scenario planning in a Watershed Management Plan for the Upper Verde River Watershed Protection Coalition located in Arizona. In addition, WLC is currently working on a project addressing economic resilience in the face of climate variability with the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments.

Other examples of potential planning projects appropriate for exploratory scenario planning include comprehensive or large area land use plans, regional planning projects, natural resource or recreational planning, resilience planning, water resource planning, transportation planning, water or sewer infrastructure planning, energy development or infrastructure siting, and climate change adaptation planning.

IV. Proposal Requirements

A. Address WLC's Areas of Interest

Projects should address Western Lands and Communities' three top areas of interest:

1. Use of exploratory scenario planning as a method within a larger planning process;
2. Multi-stakeholder engagement with wide participation; and
3. Involving a controversial issue of importance to the community.

B. Project strengths

Strong proposals should include:

- Description of the planning needs
- Rationale for using exploratory scenario planning in the process
- Identification of key stakeholders
- Letters of support for the project by key stakeholders
- Identification of in-kind resources to facilitate convening and community-wide participation
- Description of the decision-making process where the results of an exploratory scenario planning project would be considered.
- A project in which the results directly benefit, and are relevant to, a decision-making process that helps resolve a complex issue
- Plan for dissemination of project findings

C. Eligibility

A strong proposal will involve a partnership of appropriate organizations. Groups eligible to apply include:

- Municipal, county or regional planning agencies
- Intergovernmental agencies
- Community organizations
- Citizen coalitions
- Watershed organizations

D. Project Criteria

Each project submission will be evaluated by WLC staff based on the following:

- Deals with a complex problem that is controversial and/or a tough policy issue.
- Demonstrates stakeholder support and process for widely engaging the public.
- Project is doable – has adequate staffing. Project timing is consistent with availability of WLC resources.
- Project has demonstration value – can be replicated and transferred.
- Project leverages other resources/funding/staffing, as well as other WLC projects and program interests.
- Project integrates XSP well into the project, or has a project structure that can easily employ XSP techniques.
- Project type helps to diversify our portfolio of XSP projects.

E. Proposal Submission

Please submit your proposal via email to holiver@sonoraninstitute.org.

Exploratory Scenario Planning Grants

Applications will open on March 9, 2015. Applications will close at 5 p.m., April 15, 2015. The application should cover the following:

- Identify the project lead
- Brief history of lead organization, its programs and services
- Project description and outcomes. Here you will describe the project in detail. What are the goals and objectives of conducting scenario planning? How will planning be implemented? What outcomes, both immediate and longer term, is the project expected to achieve?
- Lead organization qualifications, including list of partner organizations that will participate in this planning process
- Project budget, including other funding sources and how WLC staff and funds will be used
- How much time are you willing to contribute to this project per week?
- Timeline indicating duration of key phases and project milestones. Please note that a typical process includes three one-day long workshops over the course of the project.
- Please limit your proposals to 5 pages in length. This proposal submitted is intended to initiate a discussion with details, final scope and workplan to be worked out in conjunction with WLC if your proposal is selected.

If you have questions regarding the grant application process, please contact Hannah Oliver at 602-393-4310 ext. 316.

V. Awards

Planning Grants

- The major portion of the award will be WLC's contribution of our staff time and expertise to design and lead a scenario planning exercise. WLC will also fund additional scenario planning expert consultants to assist in the exercise and provide an additional small grant directly to the applicant or local lead agency that can be used to cover some of the local costs associated with the exercise. Potentially available funds include:
 - A commitment of WLC staff time of up to 500 hours
 - Consulting time from a scenario planning expert(s) to be chosen jointly by the applicant and WLC.
 - A one-year grant to the local community up to a maximum of \$10,000.
 - Grant funds can be used for local staff planning time, logistics costs, consultants, market research, economic analyses, etc.
 - Planning processes should reflect collaborative/multi-organization efforts with one lead organization designated to apply for WLC funds.

- Following the project, we will request an accounting of how the grant was spent.

Role of Local Partners

- The applicant and other local partners are expected to serve as active participants in the exercise and dedicate adequate in-kind services to ensure a successful project. Local partners are responsible for:
 - Engaged project lead and partner who has time to contribute to this project.
 - Establishing the work plan, including working with WLC to specify the objectives and process.
 - Creating any necessary advisory or stakeholder groups.
 - Organizing workshop logistics and sending out the workshop invitations and other advertising as needed.

VI. Timelines

RFP issued: **March 9, 2015**

Grant applications and full proposals due: **April 15, 2015**

Proposal Evaluation: **April 15, 2015 through May 1, 2015**

Final grant decisions: **May 15, 2015**

WLC reserves the right to deviate from this schedule.