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## GEORGIA SMART COMMUNITIES CHALLENGE - *2022 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS*

The Georgia Smart Communities Challenge offers financial and technical support for applied community research projects. Up to two community projects under the theme "Smart Resilience" will be selected to participate. Participation in this cohort will be advantageous for communities planning, beginning, or evaluating resilience-related projects.

## WHY APPLY?

The Georgia Smart Communities Challenge helps your city to achieve advancement in resilience related projects by offering community research support.

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## HOW TO APPLY

The online application allows you to outline the vision, framework, and research that will occur over the project period.

**Applications Due: April 15th**

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## AWARD EXPECTATIONS

Selected communities will participate in a one-year program supporting their community research project.

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# Contents

# WHY APPLY?

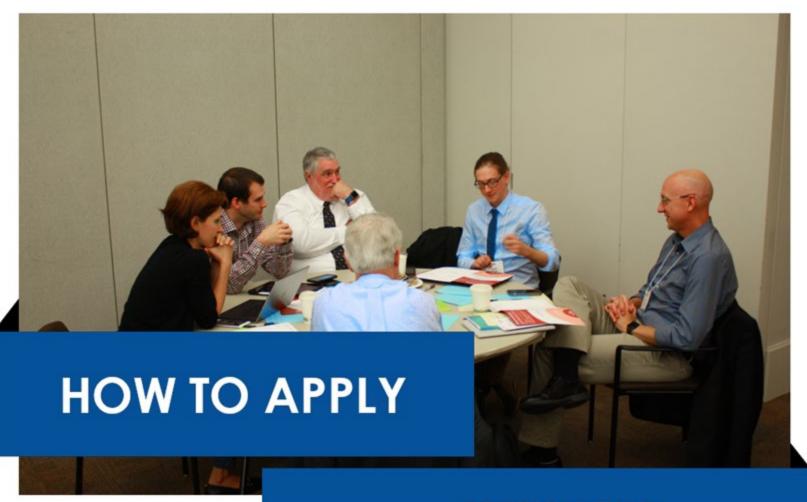## SECTION ONE

# 1. Program Overview

The Georgia Smart Communities Challenge ("Georgia Smart") is an award-winning research-led cohort and technical assistance program for local governments within the State of Georgia, USA.

It is a competitive program that supports local governments of any size within the State of Georgia—cities, counties, and consolidated city-county governments—by providing funding, access to technical assistance, expert advice, and a network of peers. Georgia Smart communities will receive access to a breadth of resources including a team of researchers, Georgia Smart program management, Smart Community Corps, and Georgia Smart partners. Alumni have successfully implemented their project and garnered additional funding and technical assistance to continue their project beyond the program period, continuing to service their residents and meet their community's goals. They have also garnered national recognition for their projects and served as a model for other communities in addressing similar problems.

For this cohort, Georgia Smart is looking to support community research projects in any region in Georgia that fit under the theme of "Smart Resilience". Example smart cities project topics under this theme include but are not limited to: disaster response, climate change response, energy efficiency, energy infrastructure, electric mobility/adaptation, and/or reducing carbon emissions. Selected communities will work with their research team, cohort, to execute their proposal over the course of one year.

Georgia Smart is a program under the Partnership for Inclusive Innovation, a public-private partnership that spurs innovation in the State of Georgia. The Partnership for Inclusive Innovation (Partnership) is a public-private partnership that launched in 2020 to lead coordinated, statewide efforts to position Georgia as the Technology Capital of the East Coast. Dedicated to advancing innovation, opportunity and shared economic success across the state, the organization's focus on community research, student engagement and pilot programs is a powerful combination that establishes Georgia as a living lab for inclusive innovation.

# HOW TO APPLY

## SECTION TWO

## 4. General Guidelines

In consideration of an application for Georgia Smart, communities and researchers should consider the following points:

- ***Why*** *does the community need or desire to become a smart community?* In answering the "why" question, communities should also answer three related questions:
  - ➢ What are the conditions or issues driving this need?
  - ➢ What are the "smart" technologies and concepts that will address these needs?
  - ➢ What will the future look like in the community once these technologies have been adopted?
- ***How*** *will the community transition from its current state to its desired future state?* This question addresses the long-term, big-picture plan for realizing the community's vision.
- ***What*** *planning activities will the community undertake and what plans will the community create under the Georgia Smart program, in support of its end-goals?* This question addresses the community's proposed plan of action during the two-year execution phase of Georgia Smart.

Georgia Smart projects should strive to address the needs of the community equitably and inclusively that involves some type of "smart communities" technology. As such, teams should consider these needs, along with a compelling vision and set of community-derived goals for the community's future, when developing their proposals. Likewise, teams should consider the impact of applying "smart" technologies in their community and how those communities have been improved through these technologies.

Georgia Smart communities should demonstrate a commitment to *long-term* project support and citizen engagement, clear and defined technology evaluation criteria, and a pathway toward sustained progress beyond this project. More than exploring the potential of advanced technical systems, communities should seek to improve the lives of citizens, expand and extend government operations and services, and generate new economic opportunities for businesses and the workforce at large. Georgia Smart projects are simply the means through which communities can plan for and ultimately achieve these quality-of-life outcomes.

Other General considerations include:

- Applications should express long-term commitment to a smart community approach within their local government beyond the program timeline. This approach can be expressed through examples of other contemporaneous projects, past referenda, or other means;
- Applications should illustrate deep knowledge of the challenges that face their residents;
- Applications should articulate a holistic understanding of smart communities, including strategies to reach underserved populations within a jurisdiction;
- Applications must clearly express how the project fits within one of three topical areas;
- Applications must articulate other known challenges within their jurisdictions to contextualize the plan amongst other priorities.
- Finally, successful proposals should incorporate plans for how the community will work towards one or more of the following overarching goals:
  - o Add and/or extend governmental services in order to increase participation, inclusion, efficiency, and/or openness in local government;

- o Increase and/or sustain communication between citizens and government, amongst governmental departments, and across government jurisdictions and subject matter domains;
- o Reach underserved populations and develop economic opportunities that balance growth and equity;
- o Mitigate short-term challenges, while planning for long-term strategies; or
- o Commit to strategic planning, organizational change, and capacity building.

Community-researcher teams that are selected to participate in the cohort will have one year to complete their projects, as described in their proposal. As such, projects must be designed to reach their end and produce meaningful results in this time. Projects will be formally announced on or before July 2022, and projects will officially begin in June 2022. Projects will officially conclude in July 2023 with a project out brief and the completion of a final report for publication of the project's outcomes, research, and any publically-releasable data.

As this Georgia Smart cohort will fund research support, projects must include, a research component which will be undertaken under the guidance and expertise of a research partner. This research component should be designed in conjunction with the researcher who will lead the research effort and generally assist with and advise on the community's proposal and (if selected) project execution. The call for this research is open-ended, but it must be focused on the theme of "Smart Resilience", and it must directly advance the community's project goals, or generally align with the community's needs, goals, and framework.

## 5. Summary of Financial Support

Georgia Smart provides support for community-researcher teams in the following ways:

- One research grant per community-researcher applicant team, up to $100,000 total, to be used to support the project and the efforts of the team's research partner(s) – community-researcher teams will determine how the funding is divided as part of the budget section of the proposal;
- Eligibility for Smart Community Corps interns (local university student teams) to be placed in your community to work with your team on your Georgia Smart project for 10-12 weeks during summer 2023. Paid for by Georgia Tech and funded outside your community grant funds. Students will work 40hrs/week alongside your team to enhance project execution during the last quarter of the project.
- Technical support from experts at Georgia Tech and from a network of partners to assist with the execution of projects, refine and develop long-term project plans, and learn best practices from other smart communities and network partners;
- Access to a network of peer governments to share best practices and learnings in monthly calls with Georgia Smart staff and partners;
- Monthly meetings with Georgia Smart staff to discuss the current status of the project and emerging issues, barriers, or questions;

Teams should include a budget of expected expenses (M&S, Labor, Student Labor, etc.) in the grant proposal. Researchers must support the community team by participating in all monthly

status telecoms, workshops, and other related Georgia Smart events. Teams will be responsible for concise monthly reporting to Georgia Smart, as well as driving intended research outcomes.

Funds may be used to hire a master's level GRA, for Materials & Supplies (M&S), or to provide for up to 50% of the lead researcher's time with a minimum time budget of 1%. Tuition waivers, if required, must be applied for through your individual school. No tuition waivers are available from the Partnership. We strongly advise researchers to coordinate this with the academic advisors in their home organization or department.

Funds will generally be distributed in two payments – one at the kickoff of the project, and one after the midterm report. Please account for this in budget planning.

## 6. Eligibility

Teams that wish to apply to Georgia Smart must adhere to the following requirements:

- Eligible Governments: Any local government within the state of Georgia is eligible to apply to be on a team under the Georgia Smart program. These governments include city governments, county governments, and consolidated city-county governments. No population or land area requirements exist for participation. No government outside of Georgia is eligible.

- Team Formation: Applicants are encouraged to form teams that feature collaborative projects that span more than one government/jurisdiction and which include other quasi- or non-governmental participants (e.g., neighborhood planning units, community improvement groups, business associations, or corporate sponsors). Applications can feature collaboration with nonprofit or for-profit entities, but must be submitted by a lead government. Partnerships with nonprofits, such as community improvement districts, or for-profit companies, such as technology providers, are encouraged where applicable.

- Local Preference: Preference is given to applications that feature collaborations with nongovernment entities that reside within the State of Georgia.

- Researcher Preference: Applications must be either a) multidisciplinary (ex. one researcher from engineering sciences and one researcher from social sciences) and/or b) multi-university (ex. one researcher from Georgia Tech and one researcher from Valdosta State University).

- Team Leads: In the case of a joint proposal across more than one local government, a lead government ("a lead") must be identified. The lead is determined by the group of collaborators and not by any external criteria (e.g. size, types, or location).

- Letters of Support: All participating local governments must submit a letter of support from a high-ranking elected representative or employee of the local government (e.g. Mayor, County Commission Chair, City Manager, etc.). Collaborative applications across governments require a letter of support from each government involved.

- Letters of Understanding for Non-Government Entities: Applications that list collaborations with non-government entities require a letter of understanding from each collaborator, signed by a representative of the organization authorized to make such an agreement.

- Designated Point of Contact: Applications require a designated point-of-contact who is employed by the lead local government. The point-of-contact needs to have valid email and phone number and must be available to answer questions about the application during the review period.

- Joint Proposal Point of Contact: For joint proposals, the lead government furnishes the point-of-contact necessary for the purposes of application and submission. The lead will remain as the point-of-contact for the duration of Georgia Smart.

- Community In-Kind Match: Community in-kind match is required. It is expected the project lead and supporting team members spend nontrivial amounts of time on the project every month including monthly status calls, quarterly workshops, stakeholder engagement events, and at least 1 onsite event with Georgia Smart in your community. Community in-kind match is not required to be direct funding but can include budget allocations, private donations, volunteered labor hours, materials, supplies, equipment, software, professional services, land, event space, or other resources that are relevant to and may be used in the execution of the community's planned work. Communities must supply documentation with their application stating the source, nature, and value of the match, including letters of support or other documents guaranteeing the availability of such resources.

# 7. Application Requirements

Applicants must create and submit a project proposal to be considered for participation in the Georgia Smart program. Proposals will be submitted through an online portal, which can be found here. Please prepare all documentation, as listed below, before beginning your application. Proposals must be submitted through the portal no later than April 15th, 2022 at 5:00 pm. Proposals submitted after this deadline or using any other mechanism will not be accepted.

## 7.1. Establishing a Team

Application for Georgia Smart requires a team that includes, at a minimum, one (1) Project Lead from a municipality and two (2) researchers from a higher education institution. Including more project members is highly encouraged, based on the type and scale of the project.

If a community and researcher have a new or pre-established relationship and hope to apply to Georgia Smart to fund upcoming or ongoing activities, we welcome you to fill out an application in full as listed in Section 7.2 collaboratively.

Georgia Smart intends open this application process to all communities across Georgia, including those who do not have an established relationship with a research team. If your community has a planned "smart" project that could be advanced or enhanced by a researcher's expertise, please consider reaching out to Stephanie Broxton (stephanie.broxton@innovate.gatech.edu) to express interest in a researcher team match.

Please submit only one application on behalf of the entire applicant team (community and researchers).

## 7.2 Application Sections

An online application, available here, will have two sections with five subsections. Each team will be required to fill out each section completely.

The first section of the application is entitled "Project Narrative" and contains the following subsections:

a. Section 1.1 is entitled "Vision," and it addresses:

• The community's motivations for participating and what they expect to achieve in the long run; and
• Current conditions, motivating factors, citizen feedback, prior efforts, end- goals, and/or the envisioned future state of the community.

b. Section 1.2 is entitled "Project," and it addresses what the community will do during the program year. This section should clearly explain to the judges exactly what the community will do should they be selected for support and funding by Georgia Smart. This section should detail:

• A description of the project the community is seeking research support on
• How the project will impact the community;
• How this plan advances the community towards addressing its overall vision;
• The topic area being addressed by the proposal (i.e., energy efficiency, disaster response);
• An explanation of how the project ties to the theme of "Smart Resilience" in your community.

c. Section 1.3 is entitled "Research," and it addresses how a research partner will be utilized as part of this plan, including:

• A formal and detailed scope of work including:
   - A description of the type of all activities to be performed (by community and researcher);
   - A list of key project milestones to be achieved and timeline;
   - A list of general deliverables including any methods for tracking or publishing progress;
• How those activities will support either the current-year plan or the overall framework plan; and
• How the research aligns with a "smart" technology that is pertinent to the community's overall vision.

Section 2 of the proposal is entitled "Execution Plan" and contains the following subsections:

a. Section 2.1 is entitled "Cost Plan," and it contains, at a minimum:

• A brief narrative describing researcher planned expenditures and the source and nature of any matching funds (if applicable);
• A brief narrative describing the community's planned expenditures and the source and nature of its matching funds.

b. Section 2.2 is entitled "Personnel Plan," and it contains, at a minimum:

• A designated individual who will serve as the project's researcher lead, including contact information, the amount of time (hours or percentage) they will commit to the project, and their relevant qualifications;

• A designated individual who will serve as the project's community point-of-contact, including contact information and the amount of time (hours or percentage) they will commit to the project;

• A list of any other key personnel participating in the project, their anticipated role on the project, the amount of time (hours or percentage) they will commit to the project, and their relevant qualifications;

• A brief narrative describing how the team will be organized and managed.

## 7.3 Appendices

Applicants should prepare to submit the following documents as attachments in the submission portal:

a. Appendix A is required for all proposals and contains the Letter(s) of Support, each signed by a high-ranking elected official or employee of the lead government and any participating governments;

b. Appendix B is required for all proposals and is a detailed budget outline for all project activities, including community and researcher efforts. If funding will be going to more than one organization (ex. two universities), separate budgets are accepted, provided they total $100,000 or less.

b. Appendix C is required for all proposals and contains the documentation of the availability, source, and value of the team's "local match," including any letters of support necessary to prove that the resources will be made available if the team is funded under Georgia Smart;

c. Appendix D contains any Letter(s) of Understanding from non-government entities, if applicable, signed by an authorized representative of the entity.

# 8. Proposal Schedule

The following schedule outlines the timeline and events during the Georgia Smart Communities Challenge proposal period.

| Request for Proposal – Launch | March 1st 2022 |
|---|---|
| Georgia Smart Informational Webinar | March 21st, 2022 |
| Final Application Due | April 15th, 2022 |
| Winning Communities Notified | May 2022 |

# 9. Review Process

All proposals will be evaluated by a panel of judges with expertise in smart communities. Two communities will be selected to participate in the 2022 cohort. Winning teams will be notified, and a public announcement made in Summer 2022.

Judges will separately evaluate and score each proposal on its merits. Scores from each judge will be combined to select the winning communities. Applications must achieve a minimum score to be considered for participation. If no applications meet the minimum score, Georgia Smart reserves the right to select fewer than two winners or change the minimum requirements to allow for up to four winners. In this case, Georgia Smart may alter how resources are allocated to the winning teams. In the case of a tie, Georgia Smart reserves the right to break the tie using any method that Georgia Smart deems appropriate.

In keeping with the general guidance, above, applications will be evaluated using subjective metrics that are similar to but not limited to the following:

## 9.1 Specific Scoring Metrics

- Program Alignment: The degree to which the proposed plan aligns with Georgia Smart overall goals and mission. This includes evaluation of proposed project metrics including: number of governments involved in the project, number of supporting organizations involved, number of students involved, number of academic disciplines involved in research, number of universities involved, and number of technologies potentially activated (i.e. sensors installed, apps created, etc.).
- Compelling Vision: The degree to which the proposal clearly articulates a compelling vision for the community's improved future state, to be achieved through the appropriate application of "smart" concepts.
- Reasonable Plan: The degree to which the proposal presents a high-quality plan of action for the first year that is (1) generally reasonable, well-conceived, and of appropriate detail, and (2) likely to be both actionable and successful within the first year.
- Meaningful Impact: The degree to which the proposed first-year plan is like to either (1) have an immediate, meaningful, and positive impact on the community, (2) make substantive progress towards the community's end-goals, or (3) enable future efforts that move the community towards its stated goals.
- Research Oriented: The degree to which the proposal presents a reasonable and impactful plan for working with an academic collaborator.

- Realistic Cost: The degree to which the proposed budget is reasonable for the proposed activities.
- Dedicated Leadership: The degree to which proposed project leadership personnel are dedicated to the project and capable of ensuring the success of the project.
- Attainable Schedule: The degree to which the proposal identifies attainable milestones and milestone dates and incorporates sensible durations for each activity.
- Appropriate Application: The degree to which the proposal identifies and suggests "smart" concepts, technologies, policies, models, issues, etc., that are appropriate for that community's self-identified issues and opportunities.
- Community Support: The level of community support shown in the form of the value of any in-kind match proposed as well as the appropriateness of partnerships with other local community organizations who will support the project as shown in the form of Letters of Support and Understanding.

## 9.2 Additional Considerations

Partial or late applications will not be considered for this funding cycle. Partial applications include the failure to include the necessary letters of support and letters of understanding from project collaborators and partners, as well as the failure to include any required section in the proposal. Late applications are applications submitted after the submission deadline or those that are not submitted through the official Georgia Smart application portal. Exceptions will be made if the submission portal is down or unavailable due to website inaccessibility issues out of your community's control. Contact us at InclusiveInnovation@gatech.edu for assistance with the submission portal.

No restrictions exist for the number of collaborators or partnering governments on a single application. Preference will not be given to applications with a higher number of collaborators or partners. The appropriateness of the number of collaborators and partners will be evaluated based on the proposed project. No matter the number of partners or collaborators, the financial support remains the same.

# AWARD EXPECTATIONS

## SECTION THREE

## 10. Georgia Smart Schedule and Expectation of Winners

Upon winning a Georgia Smart Communities Challenge grant, project teams will be required to sign a memorandum of understanding and legal contract that outlines the rules and requirements of the execution phase of the program. Funding for a given team will be withheld until this document is signed by that team, and the team will forfeit their participation in the program if the memorandum is not signed within 45 days after winners are notified.

Project research leads will be required to act as the point of contact for all communication for the program, as well as have the authority and ability to make decisions on behalf of the project to ensure project success. Teams are required to produce monthly status reports and attend monthly status telecoms with Georgia Smart representatives. Project/Research Leads are in charge of generating a mid-year status report and a project final report. Team leads will be responsible for assisting Georgia Smart in planning one community workshop/event to be hosted by you in your community for the benefit of your project, team, and community. Community matching funds and in-kind matches may be used to cover staff salaries for the community lead and other project team members.

Teams are expected to begin work on the project by June 2022, with mandatory attendance at an initial announcement event in Summer 2022 in Atlanta (or virtually as public health requirements fluctuate). A project close-out workshop and/or SMARTer Together Webinar will be held in August 2023 to review the final outcome of each project along with the project deliverable report. Each team will also be required to participate in a public presentation of the projects at the workshop to share results, outcomes, and future plans. The dates and times of additional workshops, telecoms, and other related events will be finalized and posted after winners have been announced.

The following schedule outlines the timeline and events during the Georgia Smart Communities Challenge project period.

**Tentative Schedule:**

The following schedule outlines the draft timeline and events during the Georgia Smart Communities Challenge project period.

| | |
|---|---|
| Public Announcement of Winning Communities** | Summer 2022 |
| Georgia Smart Kickoff/Announcement Event | Summer 2022 |
| Monthly Project Status Telecoms** | Last Friday each month at 1 pm |
| Community Onsite Event* | Spring/Summer 2023 |
| Georgia Smart Spring Workshop Midterm Presentations* | December 2023 |
| Georgia Smart Fall Workshop Final Presentations | August 2023 |

*Project community lead & research lead attendance required.
**Project community team representative & research team representative attendance required.

## 11. Intellectual Property Rights

Applications will not be public documents or shared with the public without prior knowledge. Application documents will only be shared with relevant personnel and content judges.

Upon winning a Georgia Smart Communities Challenge cohort position, each project and all parties included in the project (governments and non-government entities) must consent to a data-sharing agreement with Georgia Smart, the Georgia Institute of Technology. The data-sharing agreement requires that project teams share all non-personally-identifying information and other data about the project in a shared data repository hosted at and administered by the Georgia Institute of Technology. The data is shared for research only and will not be used for any other purpose.

## 12. Further Reference

Information about recent successfully implemented Georgia Smart projects can be referenced in the following locations:

1) The Partnership for Inclusive Innovation's website

      a. Community Research Projects

2) The Partnership for Inclusive Innovation's Youtube Page

      a. City of Savannah Final Presentation

      b. City of Valdosta Final Presentation

      c. City of Sandy Springs Final Presentation

      d. Clayton County Final Presentation