METROBRIDGE

Request for Projects (RFP) from Local Governments
Deadline: April 6, 2020
Introduction
The MetroBridge program at Boston University's Initiative on Cities matches local governments in Massachusetts with faculty and students who will complete needed data collection, policy analysis, or research projects for the community. MetroBridge aims to provide a centralized access point for local government partners who wish to tap into university expertise for assistance on projects. Because MetroBridge projects are tailored to the specific needs of each partner, the program conducts an annual Request for Projects (RFP) to solicit project ideas from cities and towns across the state. You are invited to read more information below about MetroBridge and how to submit an RFP response. The MetroBridge team looks forward to collaborating with you in the future.

About MetroBridge
MetroBridge embeds real-world projects for municipalities into undergraduate and graduate courses, enlisting our students and faculty as allies in addressing real issues confronting our region and providing impactful civic engagement opportunities for students. MetroBridge assists with project scoping and refinement, coordinates student site visits to the community, arranges meetings with government partners, and ensures effective communication with city/town project liaisons. At the end of the semester, students present findings directly to local government leadership, and the MetroBridge team oversees the development of polished final reports.

Some of the recent MetroBridge projects include:
- Collecting survey data on residents’ satisfaction with public services and programs
- Interviewing elderly residents about how to better meet their needs
- Building an action plan for addressing mental health and hoarding
- Analyzing transportation data to recommended safety interventions for pedestrians/biker
- Forecasting the potential impact of home sharing regulations on affordable housing
- Measuring air quality to inform needed public health interventions

The MetroBridge program is university-wide, which means partner local governments can leverage all of the academic expertise at Boston University: climate readiness, communications and emerging media, community engagement, data science, foreign languages, historic preservation, housing, human services, land use and transportation, political science, public health, and sustainability. Local governments are encouraged to submit multiple project ideas through the RFP process. (A full list of MetroBridge projects and final reports is available at: bu.edu/ioc/metrobridge/)

MetroBridge Project Timeline (Fall and Spring Semesters)
The MetroBridge program runs on the academic semester cycle and project ideas will be reviewed for both the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. A timeline of key dates for both semesters is provided below for reference while developing project proposals. Fall project deliverables will be completed in January 2021, and Spring project deliverables will be finished in June 2021.
Request for Project Proposals (RFP)

The MetroBridge RFP is a brief online survey. Local governments are encouraged to submit multiple project ideas. The survey asks the following questions:

- Briefly explain a project your city/town would like assistance with during the upcoming year
- What specific support (e.g., data collection, literature review, policy analysis, technical assistance) are you requesting?
- Why is this project important for your city/town?
- Which city/town departments would be involved in the project?
- What progress (if any) has already been made on this project?
- What (if any) challenges or barriers do you anticipate?
- What is your preferred timeline for the project (Fall 2020/Spring 2021)?

Local government project ideas don’t need to align with any particular discipline. Some suggested topic areas to consider are:

- Arts, culture, and music
- Affordable housing
- Climate and sustainability
- Communications and social media
- Community and civic engagement
- Criminal justice and public safety
- Economic development
- Education/early childhood dev
- Elder services
- Employment/workforce dev
- Green manufacturing
- Human/social services
- Immigrant and refugee families
- Local entrepreneurship
- Opioid addiction
- Mental and behavioral health services
- Planning and development
- Politics and elections
- Policy campaigns
- Public health
- Racial equity and wealth building
- Transportation

RFP Submission and Deadline

Local governments are invited to submit project ideas at the following link: [bit.ly/metrobridge2020](https://bit.ly/metrobridge2020).

The submission deadline is Monday, April 6, 2020.

Selection Criteria and Next Steps

Submitted project ideas will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The strongest project proposals are ones that ask students and faculty to address a specific and narrow research question, and also
demonstrate buy-in from city/town leadership. The review team will also consider the feasibility of completing the proposed project(s) within the 16-week semester timeframe. The MetroBridge team will be in touch with all applicants in April/May to review their project ideas and gather more information about the local government partner.

MetroBridge will then begin the faculty-matching process to find the best course to tackle the project during the upcoming academic year. This process is often iterative, with MetroBridge coordinating phone conversations and/or meetings between faculty and local government partners to confirm the project match and to plan out the work students will undertake on behalf of the community. MetroBridge makes every effort to find a faculty match for each project, pending course offerings and faculty availability.

**MetroBridge Local Government Partner Requirements**

Local governments serving as MetroBridge partners should be prepared to donate their time, share data and reports relevant to the project(s), and – if possible – offer contributions to help cover the cost of student site visits.

In terms of time commitment, partners are expected to be available to donate their time for:

- Planning and check-in meetings/calls with MetroBridge program team and faculty
- Visiting the class on campus at the beginning of the semester to provide an overview of the project and the city/town
- Hosting a student site visit (if desired) and coordinating meetings with key local government staff and community partners
- Attending students’ final presentations on campus at the end of the semester

Faculty often will request information from the local government partner, such as:

- Existing reports or plans related to the project
- Administrative data (e.g., resident surveys, constituent request logs, etc.)
- Access to meeting minutes with pertinent agenda items

Lastly, there is no cost to participate in the MetroBridge program, however we ask local government partners to consider offering direct or in-kind support for student site visits to help cover the costs of transportation, catering, and/or meeting space.

**Contact Information**

Please contact Emily Robbins, MetroBridge Program Manager, at erobbins@bu.edu or 617-358-8084 with any questions. Visit the MetroBridge website: www.bu.edu/ioc/metrobridge.