CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN HEALTH

SEED GRANTS

Small grants to promote growth of new connections between scholars, practitioners, educators, and/or communicators working to understand, spread the word about, and mitigate the impacts of climate change on human health.

Proposals accepted through July 2026 with quarterly deadlines.

Program will end with the July 2026 deadline.

BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND

KEY DATES

Quarterly Deadlines	September 2021 – July 2026

AT A GLANCE

What is of interest?

Linking basic/early biomedical science to climate-focused thinking.	Health care delivery outside institutions. Biomedical research.	Health impacts and health systems impacts of extreme weather events and other crises.	Outreach, communication, and education around climate and human health.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund aims to stimulate growth of new connections between thinkers working in largely disconnected fields who might together change the course of climate change's impact on human health. In the three years between Fall 2023 and Summer 2026, we will dedicate $1M to supporting small, early stage grants of $2,500–$50,000 toward achieving this goal.

We are particularly but not exclusively interested in activities that build connections between basic/early biomedical scientific approaches and ecological, environmental, geological, geographic, and planetary-scale thinking, as well as with population-focused fields including epidemiology and public health, demography, economics, and urban planning. Also of interest is work piloting new approaches or new interactions toward reducing the impact of health-centered activities, for example, developing more sustainable systems for health care, care delivery, and biomedical research systems. Another area of interest is preparation for the impacts of extreme weather and other crises that can drive large scale disruptions that will immediately impact human health and delivery of health care. Public outreach, climate communication, and education efforts focused on the intersection of climate and health are also appropriate for this call.

Work focused on issues like heat, particulates, fire, and flooding is not competitive if it does not pull in substantial thinking about climate. Simply stating that heat, for example, is increasingly viewed as a problem is not enough.

This program supports work conceived through many kinds of creative thinking. Successful applicants include not only academic scientists, physicians, and public health experts, but also community organizations, science outreach centers, non-biomedical academic departments, and more. A list of grant recipients from earlier rounds is available on the program's web page.

Proposals will be reviewed quarterly from September 2021 through July 2026. After each quarterly review, we will support or decline applications.

For further information, please contact program officer Victoria McGovern at vmcgovern@bwfund.org

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be submitted by non-profit organizations or degree-granting institutions in the United States or Canada. Applicant organizations may submit multiple proposals, but an individual may only serve as a principal investigator/project director on one application during each review period.

This call focuses on developing partnerships. Proposals from single institutions must develop partnerships that do not already occur naturally: for example, institutions proposing to link work already connected by other grants will not be competitive. Proposals from more than one institution are responsive. Academic institutions, professional societies, and advocacy organizations are only a few of the appropriate drivers of proposals. Only non-profit institutions may be supported by BWF's award, but non-profits may involve for profit organizations in their proposals. This program does not support biomedical research projects proposed by individual investigators, but only by collaborative teams.

Eligible proposals will include rationale/vision for the project, including who it is intended to impact.

Individuals may only serve twice as directors (principal investigators/project directors) for proposals supported over time by this program. Current and past awardees from other BWF programs are eligible to apply.

TERMS OF GRANT/ USE OF FUNDS

Awards are only made to non-profit organizations including degree-granting institutions in the U.S. or Canada. Non-profits incorporated elsewhere are ineligible. The institutions are responsible for disbursing the funds and for maintaining adequate supporting records and receipts of expenditures. Indirect costs may not be charged against BWF grants. Applicants must be significant partners in the work proposed and may not simply provide a non-profit pass-through. We do not allow the use of fiscal agents. A non-profit must have been incorporated and must have a U.S. IRS determination letter to apply. BWF does not pay overhead.

Salaries of support personnel and materials appropriate to administering the work should be included as direct costs. Reasonable and justified consultant costs may be included in the budget. Benefits are direct costs.

Institutions must provide an annual progress and financial report. Any unused funds (greater than $500) held by institutions when awards expire or are terminated must be returned to BWF, unless BWF has granted prior permission to retain the remainder. Proposed work should be completed in a single year. One no cost extension will be allowed.

Scientific publications or presentations that result from these awards must acknowledge the institution's receipt of a Burroughs Wellcome Fund Climate Change and Human Health Award. Copies of journal articles, white papers, essays, and other publications supported by the grant, as well as news articles and other publications stimulated by the project should be sent to BWF as part of the annual progress report.

BWF will not retain any rights to published results or patents that result from the supported work. Awardees should follow their institutions' patent, copyright, and intellectual property policies regarding discoveries that result from research conducted under these awards. BWF expects the appropriate federal, state, and local guidelines with regard to scientific and personal misconduct are in place and enforced at BWF-supported institutions.

SELECTION PROCESS

Selection will be based on the logic of the proposed activity, its potential impact on stimulating development of effective partnerships that may influence understanding of the interplay between climate change and human health or model effective approaches to changing how people, systems, places, or organizations think about the impact of climate change on human health.

To be competitive, the proposed support should not be to fund the applicant's current projects but should be utilized to catalyze new transdisciplinary effort. We expect to support work that brings new collaborators together, pulls fields together in new ways, or combines separate resources into more powerful wholes. We do not expect to support work that, but for funding, is easily within an applicant's capacity.

Proposals involving gathering people should include a description of a backup plan for proceeding if COVID-19 concerns again limit contact between participants.

Proposals will be reviewed by a standing committee within BWF with advice from expert reviewers drawn from a panel recommended by the National Academy of Medicine. BWF does not provide substantial critiques of unfunded proposals. Community-based organizations have had considerable success in this program and we still encourage them to apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Creating and Completing a Grant Application

A proposal consists of material submitted through the online grant portal. Please register through the online grant portal using your institutional email. The proposal must be submitted by an eligible institution that intends to manage the proposed award.

Proposal Elements

- Applicant information
- Institution information, including proof of non-profit status (Except for for-profit universities, most degree-granting institutions have the appropriate status. Please contact the program associate if you are unsure of how your institution demonstrates this status.)
- List of partnering organizations/institutions
- Signing Official Information (At degree-granting and research institutions, see your grants office. At other non-profits, see your executive director.)
- Cover sheet—available to download in ProposalCentral
- Narrative Proposal—up to five pages + short reference list
- Project Budget
- Supporting documentation—short form CVs of key personnel