WRI ROSS CENTER
PRIZE FOR CITIES

Application Information Session | Prize Cycle 6



Simultaneous Interpretation

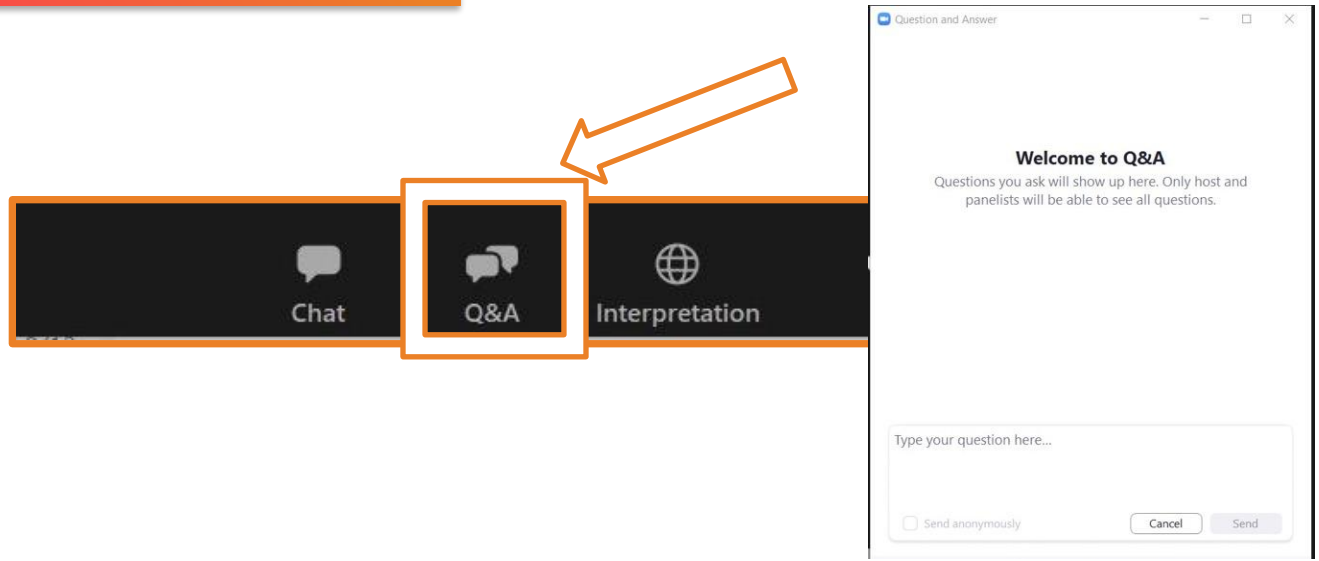
- **EN:** We have simultaneous interpretation in English! Click on the "interpretation" icon at the bottom of your screen to listen to the event in English.

- **TK**: Eş zamanlı Türkçe tercümemiz var! Etkinliği Türkçe dinlemek için ekranınızın altındaki "tercüme" simgesine tıklayın.



Questions & Answers

If you have any questions about the presentation during the event, please feel free to enter them into the Q&A box. We will have a dedicated time to respond to questions after the presentation.



AGENDA

01 Prize Overview

02 Finalists Spotlight

03 Application Process

04 Evaluation Process

05 Frequently Asked Questions

06 Q&A

01 PRIZE OVERVIEW

What is the Prize?

The WRI Ross Center Prize for Cities is a global award recognizing transformative urban projects

- Launched in 2018 to identify, celebrate and share transformative approaches to sustainable urban development
- Generously supported by philanthropist and business leader Stephen M. Ross
- The Prize aims to:
  - Elevate and amplify proven solutions reshaping urban life
  - Advance learning about urban transformation
  - Grow a movement of urban changemakers



Why cities? Why now?

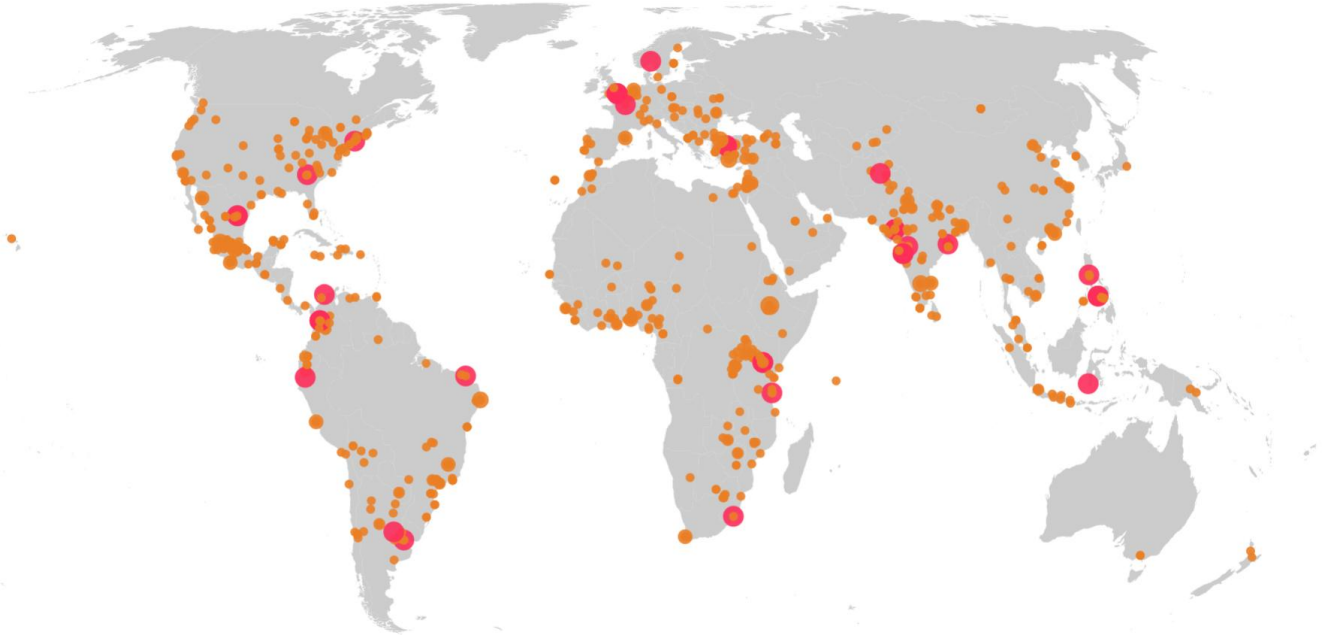
Cities are where major global challenges are felt — and where solutions are taking shape

- More than half of humanity lives in cities, and that number is rapidly growing.
- Climate change, inequality and poor infrastructure are putting new pressure on daily life.
- Making cities work better for people and the planet requires solutions from every sector and at every scale.



Five cycles of urban transformation

1,249 Applicants | **583** Cities | **123** Countries



Why apply?

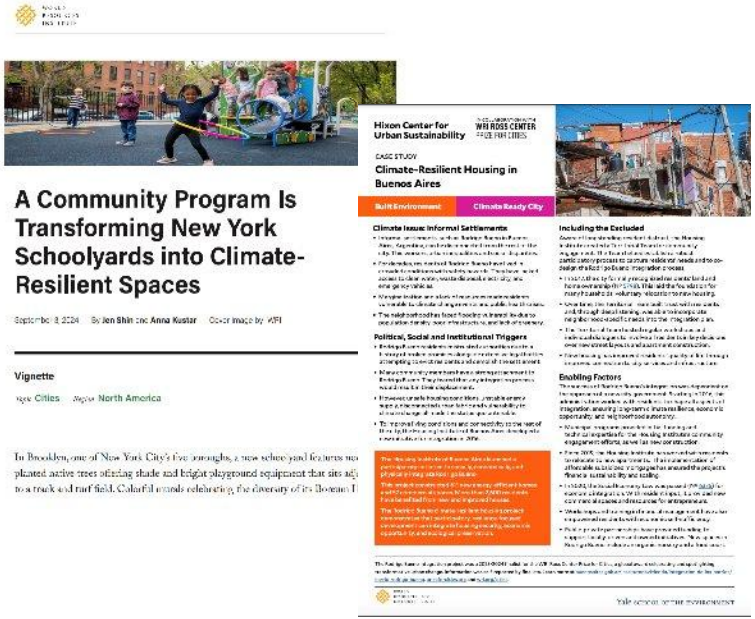
- Be celebrated on a global stage
- Receive $250,000 as the Grand Prize Winner or $25,000 as one of four finalists
- Gain exposure to international media and a world-class jury



Why apply?

Join a global network of urban experts and changemakers





A Community Program Is Transforming New York Schoolyards into Climate-Resilient Spaces

Vignette

Hixon Center for Urban Sustainability

Climate-Resilient Housing in Buenos Aires

Built Environment | Climate Ready City

Climate Issue: Informal Settlements

Political, Social and Institutional Triggers

Including the Excluded

Enabling Factors

TIMELINE

SUBMISSIONS OPEN	SUBMISSIONS CLOSE	FINALISTS ANNOUNCEMENT	JURY DELIBERATION & AWARDS CELEBRATION
SEPTEMBER 2026	JANUARY 2027	SEPTEMBER 2027	FEBRUARY 2028

Apply by January 13, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. ET

02 FINALISTS SPOTLIGHT


Book Bunk
Nairobi, Kenya

Book Bunk (Nairobi)

- Nairobi's civic infrastructure remains neglected, particularly in underserved communities.
- With nearly 60% of Kenya's population under 25, young people lack access to inclusive public spaces for learning and skill development.
- **BIG IDEA: To transform libraries into palaces for the people by:**
  - Restoring and reimagining existing public library spaces into vibrant, dignified environments
  - Ensuring free, open access to books, digital resources, and learning for all
  - Building programs and partnerships that make libraries the heart of community life



Book Bunk (Nairobi)

IMPACT

- **192,000+** direct library users since launch
- **45,000+** participants in free programs across education, arts, and well-being
- **140,000+** free meals provided to children
- **93** jobs created through restoration and library staff
- **1000+** libraries mapped across Kenya, providing an evidence base for the potential of systemic change




WRI ROSS CENTER
PRIZE FOR CITIES
2025-2026 FINALIST
Book Bunk
Nairobi, Kenya

03 APPLICATION PROCESS

How to apply

- Register your account on the application portal to receive an email with your unique password.
- Log in to start, retrieve and submit the application for your project.
- Applicants may submit one or more entries for consideration.
- The application contains 9 sections.
- You are encouraged to combine different kinds of evidence sources, including quantitative and qualitative, impact studies, user surveys, indicators of environmental, economic and social impact, press coverage, etc.



What kinds of projects?

The Prize seeks solutions already delivering change

- Projects must already be implemented and able to demonstrate impact.
- Projects may address:
  - Housing, mobility, climate resilience, waste, nature, livelihoods and more
- Businesses, NGOs, community groups, local governments and collaborations can apply.



Grand Prize Winners



2018-2019

SARSAI
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
(Mobility)



2020-2021

Sustainable Food Production for a Resilient Rosario
Rosario, Argentina
(Food)



2021-2022

Todos al Parque
Barranquilla, Colombia
(Placemaking, Renewal & Upgrading)



2023-2024

Re-Ciclo
Fortaleza, Brazil
(Sustainable Economy)



2025-2026

Move As One Coalition
Manila, Philippines
(Mobility)

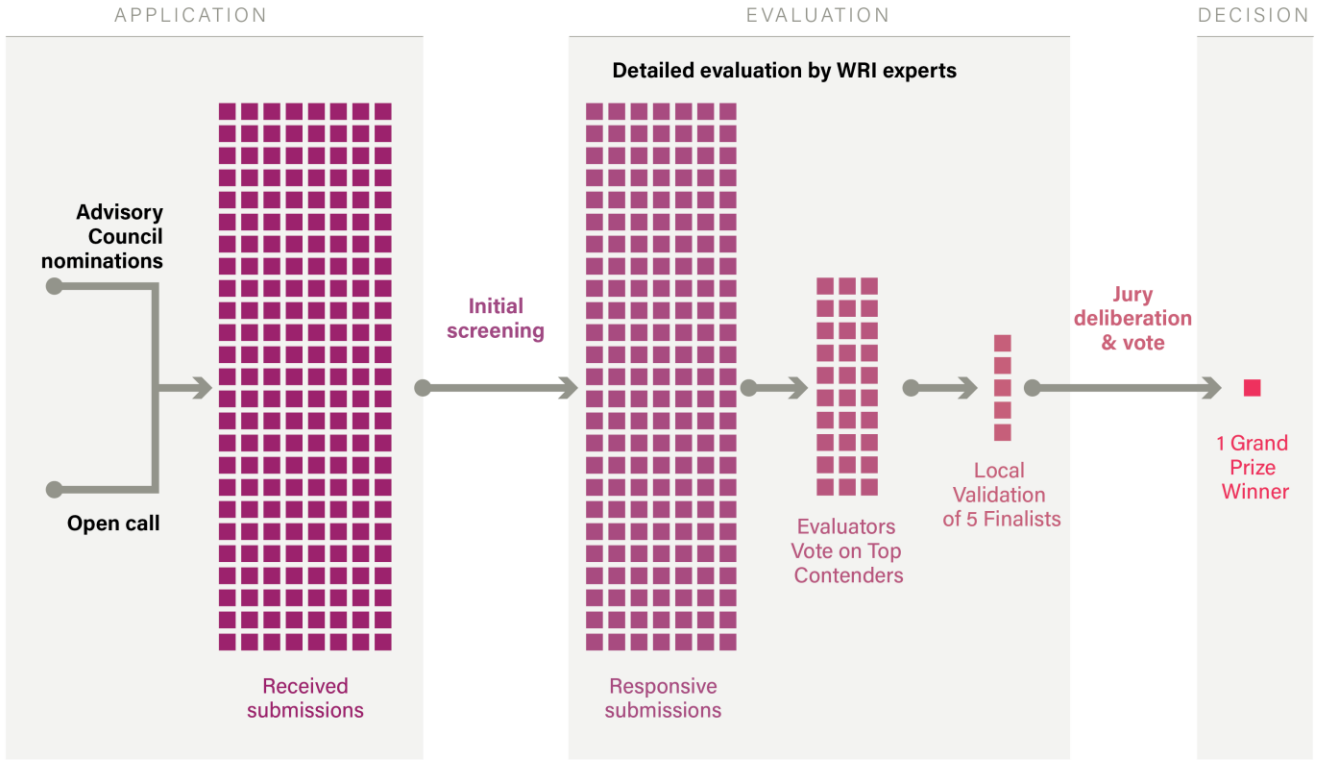
04 EVALUATION PROCESS

The Prize jury

- The evaluation is a rigorous process developed specifically for the Prize.
- Each project is first assessed by multiple WRI experts with geographic and subject matter expertise.
- An independent jury of global leaders in architecture, community empowerment, development, finance, mobility, and real estate selects the grand prize winner.
- There are protocols in place to ensure fairness.



Evaluation Process



Evaluation Criteria



BIG IDEA

The extent to which the submission demonstrates that it applies an innovative idea and/or takes a novel approach to addressing critical urban problems.



LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT

The extent to which the submission demonstrates that it has changed people's lives, mindsets and behaviors, and those of the communities they live in.



RIPPLE EFFECTS

The extent to which the submission demonstrates impact on institutions within and beyond the city, and/or seeds of transformation in other cities.

Big Idea

Relevant Q. What is the big idea of your project or initiative? How does your project or initiative address specific social or environmental challenges your city is facing? (1,250 characters)

AIM: To understand how your project uses an innovative approach to solve an important urban problem.

Focus your answer on:

1. Problem solving: How has the project contributed to solving an important urban problem?
2. Innovation: How has the project used an approach that was innovative in general and in the specific urban context?



Big Idea

Example:

SWaCH
2018-2019 Finalist
Pune, India

This project directly responded to the crisis of solid waste mismanagement in Pune, India, through a door-to-door waste collection model that improved the working conditions of informal waste workers.



Life-Changing Impact

Relevant Q: To what extent has your project or initiative addressed the problem(s) in your city and improved people's lives?* (1,250 characters)

AIM: To understand to what extent your project has changed people's lives and the city itself in general and in the below-mentioned categories (if applicable):

1. Physical Environment
2. Governance and Participation
3. Money Flows
4. Behaviors and Perceptions

Focus on

1. Using specific metrics and data to illustrate the magnitude of the impact

2. Illustrating which groups in the city experience these effects.

3. Various kinds of impacts across categories and populations



Life-Changing Impact

Example:

Green Community Schoolyards
2023-2024 Finalist
New York City, USA

This project transformed **hundreds of asphalt schoolyards** across all five boroughs into green, flood-mitigating public spaces. More than **220 thousand children and residents** have benefitted from new schoolyards and live within walking distance of public green spaces.



Ripple Effects

Relevant Qs:

To what extent has the initiative or its impact expanded citywide or across your city?* (1,250 characters) ?

Has your project or initiative inspired other cities or actors in another city or geographic context? If so, how?* (1,250 characters)

AIM: To understand how your project's impact and influence expands beyond its original scope.

Focus on illustrating

1. Scale up (institutionalization): Has change due to the project been adopted in or by local or national institutions?
2. Scale out (spatial extent): Was the project extended to another area in the city?
3. Scale across (replication beyond the same city): Has the project seeded change in other cities?



Ripple Effects

Example:

RISE
2025-2026 Finalist
Makassar, Indonesia

RISE is scaling to 30 additional settlements in Makassar, being replicated in 6 settlements in Fiji and building government capacity to embed its approach into wider urban planning and upgrading.



Additional Questions

TIMELINE AND PROCESSES

AIM: To understand key milestones in the initiative's evolution, including moments of change, success, challenge, learning,

- Timeline of no more than 10 key events
- Challenges faced and how they were mitigated
- Negative and unintended consequences
- Sustainability and next steps

05 Application Tips

What makes a strong application?

- ✓ Clear urban problem
- ✓ Evidence of measurable impact
- ✓ Demonstrated community benefit
- ✓ Clear ripple effects
- ✓ Strong data and storytelling
- ✓ Honest discussion of challenges

Mistakes to avoid

- ✗ Describing activities instead of impact
- ✗ Making claims without evidence
- ✗ Assuming evaluators know the local context of your project
- ✗ Focusing only on physical infrastructure
- ✗ Waiting until the last week to submit

06 Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is ineligible to apply?

- Projects that have not yet started
- Projects that have previously been honored by WRI as Prize finalists
- Projects that have received funding or technical assistance from WRI
- Projects whose contributors include one or more employees of WRI or its international offices



Frequently Asked Questions

In what languages can one apply?

The Prize only accepts applications in **English.**

Applicants are encouraged to seek **assistance from translators** to complete their application. Applicants may also use AI to assist with translating, drafting, or editing written responses.

Applicants are fully responsible for the accuracy of all content: responses must describe the applicant's actual project, and all facts, figures, and claims must be true and verifiable.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can I apply again if I submitted in a previous Prize cycle?

Yes, as long as the project was not previously selected as a Prize finalist and continues to meet the current eligibility requirements.

Can I submit more than one entry?

Yes. Each project must be submitted separately and meet all eligibility requirements.

Please email PrizeforCities@wri.org with your registration number and the number of additional entries you would like to submit.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is expected of applicants?

Applicants are expected to work collaboratively with WRI to:

- Provide additional documentary verification if required
- If selected as a finalist:
    - Assist the team in creating a video profile and other materials for the jury
    - Participate in the awards ceremony and learning events

Note: WRI provides travel and accommodations for two guests from each of the finalist teams.



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08 Q&A

Thank you!

PrizeforCities.org

PrizeforCities@wri.org

#PrizeforCities