

**SOLVE IT. SHARE IT.**



## **Welcome to the Mayors Challenge!**

If you and your team have a bold idea that can make government work better, solve a serious problem, or improve city life, we want to hear from you.

**Bloomberg Philanthropies** is inspired by the opportunity to find and spread innovative local solutions to national problems. We created the Mayors Challenge to celebrate the creative problem solving and incredible innovation that is happening in city halls from coast to coast. The five boldest ideas with the greatest potential for impact will win funding as well as national and local recognition.

**This challenge is all about identifying a need, solving a problem, and sharing your knowledge so that other cities and citizens can benefit from your insight and actions.**

We look forward to learning about the passion and vision behind your idea, how it will impact your city, and your plan for making it happen along the way.

We know that filling out applications isn't on anyone's list of favorite activities, so we're aiming to make the process as short, painless, and straightforward as possible — with only 24 questions standing between you and up to \$5 million. After you RSVP you'll receive a link in late July that gives your team participant-only access to the online application. In the meantime, you can refer to these application questions and check out examples of great ideas and helpful tools on the Mayors Challenge website.

When you're ready, we'll walk you through the application questions...

## Vision

Ignite & Inspire

*Here, we want to understand the novelty and creativity of both the idea and your approach.*

1. What's your big idea? Please describe your solution with the one-liner that says it best. (up to 30 words)

The City of Knoxville wants to create a unique business model that encompasses the entire urban food cycle by connecting land, farming jobs, processing facilities, food transit, sale, and composting.

2. What makes your idea bold or innovative? Please elaborate. (up to 150 words)

This idea is bold because it strives to create a replicable plan that encompasses the entire urban food cycle, distilling it into model ordinances and a business strategy that addresses food deserts comprehensively. The plan will provide employment and economic development opportunities, and link three key and as yet unconnected components: repurposing vacant lots for food production, partnering with existing facilities to establish certified kitchens used to process food, and establishing a legal mechanism to enable a business model of food distribution to those in need and produce sale to local establishments.

Though there is a Harvard tool kit available, no city has yet created a replicable comprehensive local food system that addresses land, jobs, processing, sale, and composting at once on a large scale. This idea creates steady supply for existing demand by tackling difficult zoning regulations, high insurance costs, and cross-sector interaction. It connects the dots.

3. Is your idea:

- a. **Brand new — never before implemented**
- b. Something that has been implemented elsewhere but is new (and improved!) in your city
- c. An existing pilot or demonstration project you wish to expand

4. Does your idea demonstrate the creative or unexpected use of your city's assets, resources, and talent? If so, how? (up to 150 words)

Absolutely. Knoxville owns 184 vacant lots, maintained for \$117,033 annually. Our plan to turn these operating budget burdens into assets is creative because it allows the land to become a resource provider rather than a resource drain. Repurposing lots to manage

urban agriculture is unexpected because historically, lots have been viewed as redevelopment assets with no consistent plan.

Turning blight into a revenue generator and job creator is not only responsible: it requires the skills, talent, and outside-the-box thinking of city legal, risk, property management, and public service staff. It requires partnership from the county health department, our not-for-profit and business sectors, our governing bodies, and neighborhood associations. Our idea requires unexpected use of already established kitchens, stretches the concept of what city lots can be used for, challenges our economy to accept a new business model, and demands attention from a host of parties that currently function in silos.

5. Mayors are uniquely positioned to galvanize partnerships and resources across sectors, thereby expanding an idea's reach and achieving greater scale. Does your idea put this "stretch principle" into action? If so, how? (up to 150 words)

**TIP**

*By "stretch principle" we mean that you are looking beyond local government, leveraging talent, partners, and resources from other sectors and places to amplify your reach and potential impact.*

Knoxville looks beyond itself to make this idea reality. The talent, partners, and resources this idea leverages extends reach and impact. Knoxville hosts a five-county HUD sustainable planning initiative that is in part examining logistics of a comprehensive food system in east Tennessee. Knoxville is home of the nation's first Food Policy Council.

Our partners include the Chamber of Commerce to create the business model, and local businesses such as Sysco, Tupelo Honey, Tomato Head, and the Farmers Market to drive demand and purchase produce grown in food deserts. Not-for-profits such as farm-based El Puente and job-creating SEEED foster employees.

Establishments like Beardsley Community Farm, Knoxville Community Action Committee, AmeriCorps, Knox Permaculture Guild, Community Development, Green Thumbs, and local church facilities will help with training, equipment, processing, and transportation. Mayor Rogero declared sustainable growth first priority, and is committed to using her positive influence to galvanize and leverage cross-sector partnerships.

## **Implement**

### Plan & Execute

*In this section, we want to understand the path for getting your idea from where it is today to successful implementation and impact.*

*Please bear with us. This is the longest part of the application, but an extremely important one in evaluating your idea.*

6. Briefly outline your implementation plan — what's your thought process for getting to the finish line? (up to 250 words)

#### **TIP**

*If you already know some key milestones and activities, it would be great to share them here. Answers written in bullet format are welcome.*

Our starting line includes already adopted resolutions to allow goats, hens, and some community gardens, but there are still ordinances and zoning modifications to adopt before this model will have a strong infrastructure.

- Step one is logically assessing legal and insurance mechanisms that will allow this idea to materialize into reality, modifying language and definitions accordingly.
- Step two is role definition with partners to create a road map of responsibility that will lead to success: who is responsible for city-deeded lot management, what local not-for-profit will foster urban farm employees, what business community donations will augment equipment purchase, the transportation logistics of moving produce to market, and what local establishments will be consistent buyers.
- Step three involves a small scale pilot of the project in east Knoxville to remove any system kinks, and refine the program accordingly. East Knoxville is home to large scale blight and unemployment. Providing access to opportunity is a large component of this cycle, so starting small in this place of need is strategic.
- Finally, when the foundation is firmly established, there will be city-wide program expansion and sharing of lessons learned so the idea is over the finish line and a thriving, replicable reality.

These key milestones provide a brief and broad outline of implementation, but Knoxville fully understands the challenges of eliminating food deserts are in the details. It is because of this that a cross-sector implementation team will meet every three weeks to keep the details assigned and moving.

7. What time frame feels realistic to implement your idea?

- a. 1–6 months
- b. 6–12 months
- c. **1–2 years**
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. How much will this idea cost over the next three years? (up to 50 words)

Knoxville's idea is scalable. Starting small, it can grow to fit budgetary capacity - which is why it is an excellent choice for Bloomberg Philanthropies. An example from Chicago's Growing Home program, which addresses the job creation aspect of this idea, shows an annual budget of \$1,100,000 for 11 acres.

9. Have any funds already been secured to support this project (e.g., planning grant from community foundation or implementation funds)? (up to 50 words)

As part of our HUD East Tennessee planning grant (PlanET), we are conducting a regional food systems analysis with the City of Knoxville as center of a five-county food local distribution system. Our proposal is supported by this research, which provides proof that we are innovatively representing a critical need.

10. Are there critical partners you'd like to engage outside of government? Are they already on board? (up to 50 words)

This idea definitely requires all sectors to succeed. Knoxville's critical nonprofit and business partners (listed in question 5) are already on board. Many have already approached us or our partner agencies, like the Food Policy Council, about solving difficult issues surrounding the currently disconnected nature of local food mechanisms.

11. What non-monetary resources will you need to implement this idea? For example: skills, talent, or technologies? (up to 150 words)

**TIP**

*Which of those do you already have, and what is the plan for securing those you don't have?*

Knoxville has top talent and creative minds to make implementation a success; the personalities pushing the local food movement are sharp, flexible, and positive. We own 184 vacant lots. We have an 8% unemployment rate that is even higher in proximity to blight. We have a skilled team who understands legislation barriers, and a plan to address those. We have nonprofits specifically skilled in training growers and in maintaining plots.

We have over 500 faith based kitchen facilities throughout the community and a strategy for approaching them.

We have a burgeoning food culture that demands cohesion. Currently lacking the details of the business plan, we will involve the Chamber's small business think-tank to develop a solid economic model that is transferable to other cities. Building the farming infrastructure on a lot-by-lot basis: storage sheds, water hookups and tools - will be a challenge at first, but not insurmountable.

12. Who is the city hall or agency lead for this idea, responsible for both development and implementation? Why is this the best person to get the job done? (up to 100 words)

Susanna Sutherland requested application to Bloomberg Philanthropies from Council and developed a community survey to capture ideas for this grant. From them, she formed a selection committee to make mayoral recommendations. She will be responsible for leading this cross-sector partnership with an implementation team designed to develop a whole-system approach.

Susanna was hired to found the city's first Sustainability Office, and is a bright mind with a strong work ethic that is able to build bridges between silos. Her successful project management has won praise from granting agencies, and her common sense, practical approach to big ideas makes them real.

13. What are the three largest risk factors that could derail your idea, and why? What is your plan to mitigate those risks? (up to 250 words)

The three largest risk factors Knoxville faces with our urban food system idea are:

- Engaging the community in a manner that addresses differing priorities succinctly and realistically.
- Modifying zoning regulations so that the idea can grow unhindered.
- Addressing insurance requirements so they are not program prohibitive.

Knoxville's idea connects land, jobs, facilities, sale, and waste recycling, none of which are easy connections for government to make. The details contain the greatest challenges, as a conglomerate of entities is required for success, each with different primary motivations. Our plan to mitigate the risks includes the following:

- Engage the community by developing the business plan first, so this is a cohesive idea people can understand.
- Modify zoning regulations after developing the mechanism to transfer property and

risk, so the insurance concern will be answered before laws are changed.

- Modify and send zoning regulation changes through applicable governing bodies after workshops have been conducted, to explain the project's function and intent.
- Post a request for qualifications to solicit a nonprofit leadership of the program, so we can be certain we have obtained the best possible partner for success.
- Build upon the winning nonprofit to add capacity, in conjunction with efforts already working on different pieces of the puzzle - such as PlanET, Together Healthy Knox, and the Eat, Live, Play initiative.

The grant award will ensure connecting the urban food cycle is prioritized. Knoxville has an exceptional reputation for diligently meeting grant commitments and mitigating risk.

14. How long does the current administration's term in office last? Will this affect successful implementation? (up to 50 words)

Implementation is enhanced, not threatened by current politics. Mayor Rogero was elected to her first term in 2011 and in 2015 plans to run again. She is well loved for her innovative vision and practical implementation style. Mayor Rogero supports this effort wholeheartedly, as she has a sustainable administrative platform.

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Need a little more leeway? If your idea isn't a great fit for the questions in this section, feel free to use this space to explain in greater detail. (We ask that you also try to answer the questions in this section as best you can — we'll only review applications that have all questions answered.) (up to 200 words)

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## Impact

Improve & Amplify

*Here we want to understand your idea's expected positive public benefit.*

15. Check all of the types of impact that apply:

- a. This idea will address serious social or economic problems**
- b. This idea will improve customer service for residents or businesses**
- c. This idea will enhance accountability to or engagement with the public**
- d. This idea will create efficiencies that make government work better, faster, and cheaper**

16. What outcomes will you achieve and how broadly will they be experienced?

(up to 150 words)

### TIP

*Please refer to the impact types detailed above. If you have a question about this, please visit the Questions tab on the Mayors Challenge website, or if you're logged in for applicant-only access, visit the Q&A Forum, where you can ask questions and receive answers.*

- a.) Knoxville's idea addresses the serious social problem of limited healthy eating options by designating growing and processing space in target areas. It addresses economic problems by connecting people to jobs and by developing a business model that removes urban food deserts.
- b.) Our idea improves customer service for residents and businesses by enabling local government to provide a regional food system that allows an unprecedented integrated approach to all aspects of the urban food cycle.
- c.) Our idea enhances accountability to the community by allowing the city to accept leadership in creation of the interconnected system. It enhances engagement by providing accountability and support to the workers, as well as opportunities for local buyers.
- d.) Our idea creates efficiencies that make government work better, faster, and cheaper by creatively attacking the heart of the tax payer burden: land maintenance, health, and behavioral issues - with innovative solutions.

17. How do you know there is a need for this solution in your city? (up to 100 words)



**TIP**

*If it would help to articulate your idea or illustrate need, you may attach ONE additional key piece of material (e.g., video, PDF, white paper, news article), not to exceed two pages.*

Knoxville struggles with concentrated areas of poverty close to downtown, in which residents do not have access to healthy food. According to the Food Research and Action Center Report (Food Hardships in America, 2011), Knoxville ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation for areas lacking food accessibility. The State of Tennessee ranked 6<sup>th</sup>. Food deserts are especially plentiful in the southeast, despite temperate climates and an agricultural history. A solution is needed, and we have a plan for solving it. The same report recommends job creation as an essential element to the solution, so we know we are on the right track.

**18. What is the best evidence available on why your idea, implemented at the scale described in this application, can produce the amount of impact you expect?**  
(up to 200 words)

Urban growing facilities, like Knoxville's Beardsley Farm, successfully use former vacant property for food production, but lack the economic development piece. Examples cited in a Youngstown, OH feasibility study indicate that there is a way to sustain jobs and make a profit from urban agriculture, but there is no food processing element in these examples. A Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems research brief about community kitchens shows they are essential to the urban food cycle.

The key to our idea is that it's a holistic approach tying together successes demonstrated by efforts to address at least one portion of the food system. Our idea is a program that connects blight, jobs, processing facilities, transit, sale, and composting into one cohesive cycle. It will have national impact because it will comprehensively link urban food components that communities all over the county have been puzzling over.

Urban sustainability networks, food advocacy groups, and local businesses are all discussing various aspects of this picture, but not yet cohesively. Copious reports have been published on the topic of urban food, and many cities have piloted various aspects, but no one has created a replicable model of how to make the system complete and sustainable.

**19. How long do you think it will take to show results?**  
(up to 100 words)

Knoxville expects planning and implementation to take two years, with results showing immediately upon sale of the first growing season's produce. Due to the legislative component, this is a very aggressive schedule that demands diligence and constant

attention from the implementation team, which is why they will meet every three weeks at a minimum. In year one, funds from the grant will seed nonprofit capacity to hire workers and develop farming infrastructure, as the legal and economic components work on system development. In year two, the pilot will be implemented, and the system will be refreshed with its own profit.

20. How will you measure impact? (up to 100 words)

**TIP**

*What are the metrics you'll use and how will you collect that information?*

Knoxville understands very well that what cannot be tracked cannot be measured, which is why our initiatives come with definite deliverables. In this case, we will measure impact in lots rehabilitated, jobs created, pounds of food processed, pounds of food transported, pounds of food sold, and pounds of food composted.

If any metric isn't performing, we will evaluate why and examine options for improvement. If any metric is over-performing, we will examine why and capitalize on it. There will be room in the system we create to adjust factors, and we will be flexible enough to re-chart course accordingly.

21. What's the headline on the cover of *Bloomberg Businessweek* in five years, after your idea is implemented? (up to 25 words)

**“Bloomberg Philanthropies grant creates ripple effect urban food model that transforms America's produce sourcing”**

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(up to 200 words)

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## Replicate

### Leadership & Legacy

*In this section, we want to understand if your idea would be viable in other cities, too. (A key goal of the Mayors Challenge is to spread successful ideas among cities.)*

22. Can you demonstrate that there is a need for this solution in other cities?  
(up to 200 words)

**TIP**

*Name 5–10 cities that share this same problem and could benefit greatly from replicating your idea. Explain why other cities need your solution. Be creative!*

Princeton, the Food Research and Council, and cities all over America have published reports that capture both the data and the need for this cyclical system. According to FRAC, the top 10 cities that need this model are Bakersfield (CA), Fresno (CA), Asheville (NC), Greensboro (NC), Riverside (CA), Orlando (FL), Louisville (KY), Dayton (OH), Lakeland (FL), and Oklahoma City (OK). Clearly, other cities need Knoxville's solution because it's a national and pressing urban issue. Weather patterns have varied so much in the past decade that the USDA has issued a new map of growing zones, though Congress still doesn't acknowledge climate change.

Our nation faces challenges that it hasn't had to deal with before. We need to be prepared for the ramifications of our growing populations, manifested in unprecedented natural disasters and changing environments. Sustainable urban food is a huge piece of preparedness that we can't afford to ignore. Creating a system that regenerates itself and that has the support of all sectors is crucial to the survival of urban environments. The fact that cities all over now have food policy councils and are trying to piece this puzzle together underscores the importance of and relevancy of this grant proposal.

23. Do other cities have access to the resources they would need to roll this out?  
(up to 50 words)

**TIP**

*Does this idea require unique technology, funding, knowledge, or other assets that aren't widely available?*

Every city has vacant lots, and the need for jobs. Every city has nonprofits that have kitchens. Every city has roads for produce transit and vehicles to get food to market.

Every city has a food market, and areas to compost. Every city has the components, but not a model.

24. What excites you most about this solution for future generations? (up to 50 words)

This model is the future. It repurposes the unused infrastructure of previous generations to remove food desert from the hearts of our communities. The most exciting part of this proposal is that it touches on the most integral parts of our lives – food and health, and brings it home.

## Gut Check

### How do winning ideas demonstrate their value?

To enhance your chances to catapult your city into the Top Five — winning \$1–5 million in the **Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge** — your answers must reflect:

- **Bold, visionary thinking** that ignites innovation and inspires.
- A **thoughtful implementation** plan that will ensure excellence in execution.
- A strong argument for why this idea will achieve **measurable impact** and **improve lives**.
- **Feasibility of replication** in other cities.

### Four important questions to ask yourself before you submit your idea:

1. Is your idea legacy-worthy?
2. When brought to life, will your idea meaningfully change people’s lives?
3. Would you have “idea envy” if another city came up with and implemented your idea first?
4. Is this an idea that will be relevant — or could be made relevant — in other cities?

### How did you do?

If you answered “yes” to all four questions above, we encourage you to submit your application and we look forward to learning about the inspiration and rigorous thinking that backs it up. If you answered “no” to any of the questions, we recommend taking another pass at crafting your idea, for a better shot at the prize.

Best of luck.