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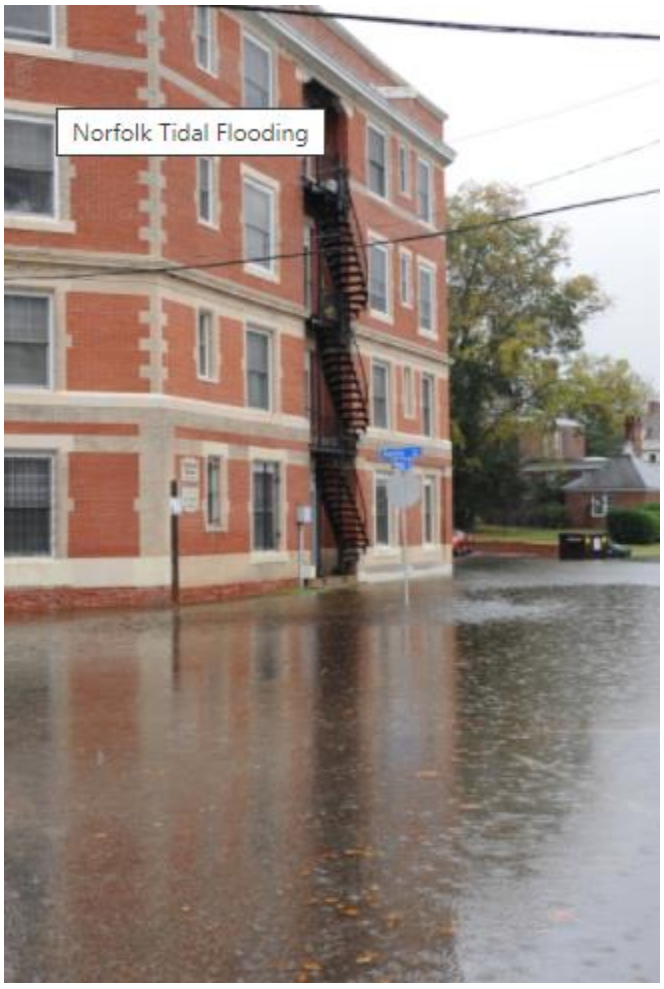
A project led by Old Dominion University resilience researchers is one of two in Virginia and 52 across the country selected to receive a $50,000 "Stage 1" grant in the Civic Innovation Challenge, a competition that challenges local innovators to build partnerships to solve real-world challenges in their communities.



The partnership between ODU and the Hampton Roads Community Foundation (HRCF) will seek to evaluate and grow a simulation-based online platform known as Convergence, Inventory, Matching and Assignment (CIMA), created to optimize post-event housing repair for displaced medically fragile and vulnerable populations.

The Civic Innovation Challenge, a National Science Foundation-led partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy and Department of Homeland Security, seeks to empower communities to address those needs through research partnerships that could potentially be scaled up to provide even national solutions.

The ODU team is composed of Joshua Behr, Rafael Diaz, Wie Yusef and Bridget Giles. Behr believes the ODU-HRCF project could meet those national needs.

"This is an exciting opportunity for several reasons," he said. "First, because there is a very real need in our community for more advanced pre-planning for recovery. Also, disparities within

Hampton Roads tend to be exacerbated by shocks, such as from storm-induced flooding. Recoveries are not even and tend to set back already vulnerable populations."

CIMA is designed to address the hurdles faced by the most vulnerable populations, adding equity and justice issues into decision-making about disaster preparedness and recovery.

The Hampton Roads project is one of only two in the state approved for this first stage of the Civic Innovation Challenge, joining a joint Virginia-Maryland-D.C. submission about the creation of a visualization tool and assessment framework for 311 systems during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each team is to refine its concepts over four months. At the end of that period, NSF will select Stage 2 awardees, who will receive funding of up to $1 million for ready-to-implement pilot projects with the potential to produce scalable, sustainable and transferable solutions to address community-identified challenges.

For the ODU-HRCF team, that four months will be spent hosting events with community stakeholders such as local nonprofits, city and state planners and charitable foundations. These events are being staged to bring partners and potential collaborators together when designing the approach to the CIMA platform.

Margaret Martonosi, NSF assistant director for computer and information science and engineering, said the Civic Leadership Challenge's inclusion of community partners is to help awardees bridge the gap between research and impact in their communities. "We're eager to see the projects develop, the teams strengthen and a national community emerge around the common goal of innovative local solutions over the course of the competition," she said.

The Hampton Roads research partnership is slotted into the Resilience Track of the competition, supported by NSF and Homeland Security, which addresses strategies to plan for community response to natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The events of the last year have shown us the importance of preparing our communities for all kinds of disasters," said David J. Alexander, senior science adviser for resilience with the DHS Science and Technology Directorate. "We are confident (the Resilience Track awardees) will generate meaningful impact on a national scale."

Behr said Old Dominion was positioned strongly for this national competition because of the collaborative work already performed through the University's Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience (ICAR).

"This opportunity is a product of the collaboration incubated through ICAR, and an example of Old Dominion University leading in the area of resilience broadly, and community resilience in particular," Behr said.

The full list of awarded projects as well as updates on the team's progress can be found at The Civic Innovation Challenge webpage

https://www.odu.edu/news/2021/3/cic_grant#.YHg5VOhKjIV