URBAN SOS:
ALL SYSTEMS GO
A global open ideas competition co-hosted by AECOM, Van Alen Institute, and 100 Resilient Cities – Pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation
Urban SOS: All Systems Go calls on multidisciplinary teams of students to envision more resilient food, water, and energy systems for supplying cities and regions today and in the future.

Across the world, this critical infrastructure is increasingly at risk due to extreme weather, the impacts of climate change, and social and economic strife. In New York City, for example, if storms or a labor dispute were to disable the food distribution hub at Hunts Point for any significant length of time, 22 million people throughout the region would be left with less than three days’ worth of food. Despite the importance and vulnerability of these systems, they are rarely prioritized as part of a city’s overall resilience, in part because they are largely invisible: Too often we don’t pay attention to our pipelines, power grids, and food supply chains until they fail.

Urban SOS: All Systems Go challenges student teams to identify an urban population facing the possibility of disruption to its food, energy, or water systems, and offer strategies that strengthen these systems’ ability to withstand future shocks or stresses, while also making them more efficient, equitable, and accessible to diverse populations. Proposals must be located in one of 67 cities that currently make up the 100 Resilient Cities network. (See www.100resilientcities.org/cities for a full list.)

Three short-listed teams will be invited to present their proposals before an interdisciplinary panel at the A+D Museum in Los Angeles in October 2015. Urban SOS: All Systems Go jurors will award US$15,000 in prizes, which may be divided among one or more teams. In addition, AECOM will make available up to US$25,000 of cash and in-kind staff time to support the implementation of a prototype of the winning team’s strategies.
If New York City’s food distribution hub is disabled, 22 million people throughout the region will be left with less than three days’ worth of food.
In order to encourage truly interdisciplinary work that challenges conventional thinking, Urban SOS: All Systems Go asks teams to define the questions and problems they will address, pick a site or sites, and propose solutions at any scale. For instance, teams can address a single building, a neighborhood, or a landscape; they can look at a stage along a supply chain or an aspect of an infrastructure system. Proposals may range from planning frameworks to small-scale physical or social interventions, a landscape strategy, or a single piece of architecture. This open-ended approach requires that teams be specific, strategic, and clear about their objectives and proposed outcomes. At the same time, they shouldn’t force their proposals to solve everything.

In particular teams must accomplish the following as part of their proposals:

- **Frame and visualize the problem:** In accessible and compelling graphics and text, describe how the selected systems work, highlighting key problems and their consequences, as well as opportunities for intervention. In particular, teams should identify how the selected system’s failure can trigger other systems to fail as well.

- **Think strategically to maximize impact:** The complexity and urgency of strengthening these systems demands high-impact solutions — surgical or small-scale interventions should be replicable, while large-scale thinking must be strategic and consider real-world constraints.

- **Develop implementable prototypes:** Teams must present at least one element or prototype of their proposal that could be realized in the next 12 months.

Teams must also identify at least one local entity working on similar issues that could benefit from collaboration with the team, inform the team’s work, and be in a position to further develop or implement the team’s prototype. Potential partners could be but are not limited to government agencies; humanitarian, charity, or relief organizations; local community organization or non-profit advocacy organizations; or public institutions such as a school, hospital, or similar entity. AECOM will donate up to US$25,000 of cash and in-kind staff time to a partner organization for implementation of the winning team’s prototype.
Responses will be judged by a jury of leading practitioners from design, engineering and other relevant professions based on these criteria:

- It communicates key existing conditions of the chosen site, system, and city in a clear and engaging way, and shows how the proposal will achieve its stated goals.

- It demonstrates interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration between sectors.

- It resourcefully addresses real-world constraints.

- It improves the performance of the selected system, reducing inefficiency, increasing its reach, or otherwise improving the wellbeing of people it serves, both in crises and on an everyday basis.

- It provides additional, ancillary benefits to the community, town, or city in which the system is situated. These could include additional employment opportunities, better environmental outcomes, etc.

- It includes research on local leadership and institutional networks, and on existing initiatives from businesses, philanthropic entities, and government agencies.
Agricultural fields in the San Francisco Bay Delta
Conservation plan by AECOM
Photo by David Lloyd/AECOM
In their proposals, teams are strongly encouraged to partner with a local organization working on similar issues that could benefit from collaboration with the team, inform the team’s work, and be in a position to further develop or implement the team’s prototype. AECOM approved partner will receive a donation of up to US$25,000 of cash and in-kind staff time from AECOM for this work. Partnership scenarios could be, but are not limited to:

- A government agency
- A humanitarian, charity, or relief organization
- A local community organization or non-profit advocacy organization
- A public institution such as a school, hospital, or similar entity
Itaipu Dam servicing Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Photo: DeniWilliams/CC by 2.0
The competition is open to undergraduate and graduate students at all levels of higher education around the world. Entrants must be enrolled at an accredited institution in a certified program during the 2015 academic year at Bachelors, Masters, or Ph.D. levels.

Submissions must come from multidisciplinary teams of up to four members; individuals may not participate alone. Students from the design fields (Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Urban Planning) who form teams must include members from at least one other discipline outside of their own, including anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, international development, sustainable economics, engineering, ecology, natural resource science, food policy, and other relevant fields.

Site selection is open to any of the 67 cities identified within the 100 Resilient Cities network. They may be at the center of one of these cities or at its fringes. Sites must be geographically identified with a Google Earth or Google Maps reference.

A complete list of the current cities participating in 100 Resilient Cities Challenge can be found here.
Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant
New York
Photo: VictoriaBelanger/CC by 2.0
June 21, 2015
Pre-registration of interest
deadline at:
aecom.com/urbansos

August 21, 2015
Final submission deadline at:
aecom.com/urbansos

September 17, 2015
Announcement of finalist teams

October 15, 2015
Presentation and critique of
semifinalists’ submissions at the
A+ D Museum in Los Angeles and
announcement of the winning team
Wind turbines at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park Stratford, London
Masterplanning and urban design by AECOM
Photo: NateshRamasamy/CC by 2.0
All Systems Go is the sixth student design competition in AECOM’s Urban SOS program. Urban SOS was created to engage students in urban planning and design, architecture, landscape architecture, economics, environmental studies, and engineering with the issues confronting modern cities and allowing them to propose solutions that, if worthy, will be seen by established professionals in their field.

This year, the program is presented in concert with the Van Alen Institute and 100 Resilient Cities – pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation. 100 Resilient Cities was created to help cities become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century. It was launched in 2013 on the foundation’s centennial anniversary, as a $100M+ commitment to build urban resilience. More about 100 Resilient Cities, its interventions and methodologies can be found here.

Van Alen Institute brings 120 years of experience organizing design competitions, as well as developing cross-disciplinary research and provocative public programs. Van Alen Institute collaborates with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow.
Lapa, Aquaduct van Carioca
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Photo: hansanting/CC by 2.0
Registration
All registration takes place on a dedicated website:
aecom.com/urbansos

Registration requires submission of an online form, which includes identification of team members, site selection, and rationale and submission of a site plan. Full details can be found in the “How” section of this document.

Entry fee
There is no entry fee for entering AECOM’s student competition.

Eligibility
The competition is open to undergraduate and graduate students at all levels of higher education around the world. Entrants must be enrolled in a certified program during the Fall Term/Semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. Submissions must be from teams of 2-4 members. Individuals may not apply on their own.

Schedule
See above

Submission requirements
All applicants must pre-register their interest at aecom.com/urbansos by leaving a contact e-mail address. They may do so at any time until the competition deadline of August 21, 2015, but must do so before submitting their final entry. Pre-registration ensures that you receive all relevant updates. Therefore, it is recommended that you register your interest before June 21, 2015.

Final submission is due by midnight EDT on August 21, 2015; entrants must submit:

- A brief description (100-250 words) of their proposal. This statement must clearly identify the name of the city and the challenges and solutions that address the competition theme.
- The name(s) and contact information of the team members.
- Site coordinates (via Google Earth) of the location, or an address that is searchable on Google Maps.
- A PDF slide presentation of up to 10 slides. These must include images and/or text. There is no word limit but font size must be legible when printed at A4 paper size.
- All responses must be in English, with any measurements provided in metric units.
- Optional: Student teams are not required to identify a charitable, humanitarian, relief, government, or non-profit partner group, but if they have one pre-identified they may specify one. If identified, this organization should be clearly stated in the brief description or PDF slide presentation accompanying the proposal.

Entrants are encouraged to focus their submissions on clear, concise communication emphasizing main ideas, key points and visible design solutions. Students may include photographs, diagrams, drawings, renderings, collages or other visualizations to express their solution.

Slide presentations must be in Adobe Acrobat PDF format. Each file must be no larger than 5MB. They must be A4 paper size and landscape orientation.

Submissions must be uploaded using the submission link on aecom.com/urbansos by midnight EDT on August 21, 2015. Entrants will receive a confirmation that the files have been uploaded. (Please retain confirmation for reference.)

Failure to comply with any of these submission requirements will result in immediate disqualification.

Judging
The three final teams will be selected by a judging panel comprised of AECOM design and engineering professionals from offices around the globe. The three finalist teams will be invited to present their work to a jury at the A+D Museum on October 15, 2015; the jury will announce the winning team at the event.

The jury at the A+D event will include:
Claire Bonham-Carter
Vice President, Design + Planning, AECOM
Stephen Engblom, AssocAIA,
Senior Vice President, Cities, AECOM
David van der Leer
Executive Director, Van Alen Institute
Notification
All entrants will be notified by e-mail by September 17, 2015 when the three finalist teams are announced. The three finalist teams will be given approximately one month to develop their proposals further. The winning team will be announced at the event at the Center for Architecture on October 15, 2015.

Winner and prizes
Each of the three semi-finalist teams will receive an honorarium to contribute to travel expenses related to visiting Los Angeles to present the team’s submission. These honoraria are to contribute to expenses related to attendance and presentation at the A+D Museum only and cannot be exchanged for other prizes. No other costs or fees will be covered by AECOM or the sponsors.

The winning team (or teams) will receive a cash prize. The total prize money is valued at US$15,000, which may be divided among one or more winning teams.

Up to US$25,000 of combination of cash and in-kind staff time will be donated by AECOM to a charitable or humanitarian organization or related agency to help further develop the winning proposal. Decisions made by the jury shall be final.

Number of entries
Individuals may participate on only one team. Each team is permitted to enter only one submission.

Publication restrictions
Entrants may not refer to projects that have already been implemented or that have been designed on the basis of any agreement entered into by the entrant or entrants with a public, public/private or fully private body with the intention of actual development of the project in question. Similarly, entries may not refer to projects published before the last day of the deliberations of the judging panel.

Infringement of copyright and other intellectual property
All work submitted for the competition must be the entrant’s original work. It is the entrant’s sole responsibility to ensure that the work submitted does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party, including, but not limited to copyright, trademark and design right. AECOM shall not be responsible for entrant’s infringement of any third party intellectual property rights, regardless of whether said infringement was known or should have been known by entrant.

Use of submitted works
Entrant agrees that AECOM and competition sponsors are granted the non-exclusive reproduction rights to all entries for AECOM’s advertising, promotion, exhibition, print publication and internet purposes directly relating to the competition. AECOM shall have no responsibility for any unauthorized use of the entrant’s works by any third party, including but not limited to the sponsors.

AECOM reserves the right to cancel the competition or amend the competition rules, as well as these terms and conditions, without notice. However, any changes to the competition rules, as well as these terms, AECOM shall notify the entrants as soon as possible.

By entering this competition an entrant is indicating his/her agreement to be bound by these terms and conditions.

This competition shall be governed in all respects, including validity, interpretation and effect by the laws of the State of California without giving effect to the conflict of laws principles.

All taxes on any prize won are the sole responsibility of each winner, including, without limitation, any federal, state, or local taxes, which may be deemed applicable in such winner’s jurisdiction of residence.

Further information and questions:
All information required can be found on aecom.com/urbansos

If you have questions, please contact AECOM at aidan.flaherty@aecom.com