



How the **Green Infrastructure Champions Network** can help you!

What is green infrastructure?

Every year, trillions of gallons of rainfall wash into North American rivers and lakes. This stormwater runoff can include raw sewage and other pollutants that contaminate drinking water, sicken people and wildlife, and strain municipal water systems. Many communities and businesses are turning to **green infrastructure (GI)**, a cost-effective approach to water management that uses technology like green roofs, rain gardens, tree cover and permeable pavement. GI mimics the natural water cycle by cleaning rain where it falls, reducing runoff and improving the health of surrounding waterways and communities.

Why should my community care about green infrastructure?

Implementing GI can have many environmental, economic, and health benefits for your community. GI helps improve water quality by reducing the runoff of pathogens, chemicals and sediment. GI can also help improve air quality and reduce smog. As our climate changes, implementing GI can help communities manage flooding and drought and protect coastal areas.

GI can also help communities deal with reduced budgets by – in many cases – reducing infrastructure capital costs as well as wastewater pumping and treatment costs. Additionally, increased green space has been shown to increase property values and recreational opportunities, benefiting both businesses and homeowners. Permeable pavements, green roofs, and other types of GI can also reduce energy costs by reducing the amount of heat reaching and being absorbed by buildings.

Finally, research is increasingly showing that trees, plants and green space can have a positive impact on community health. Studies have linked access and proximity to green space with decreased levels of inner-city crime, higher longevity, and reduced stress.

What is the GI Champions peer-to-peer mentoring network?

The GI Champions peer-to-peer mentoring network will connect experienced GI practitioners with individuals that would like to bring GI to their communities. The mentoring network will foster the transfer of knowledge from experienced GI practitioners to a broader network of communities across the binational Great Lakes basin. “Pioneer Champions” that have successfully implemented GI in their community will be paired with “Emerging Champions” that are eager to expand GI implementation in their community. Champions will meet monthly (by phone or in person) to discuss challenges, answer questions, provide guidance and feedback. Emerging Champions will be able to apply for small grants to help catalyze the mentorship network and build GI capacity in their community.

The Champions network will be run by the Great Lakes Commission, which has a long history of facilitating collaboration to advance solutions to our region’s economic and ecological issues.

How do I get involved?

Visit www.glc.org/work/champions/network to get involved!