



THE REACH CENTER AND GW SRI ANNOUNCE 2025 PILOT AWARD GRANTEES!

The [Research and Engagement for Action on Climate and Health \(REACH\) Center](#) and the [GW Sustainability Research Institute](#) are thrilled to share this joint announcement of 2025 Pilot Award recipients! These awards recognize outstanding research teams whose innovative projects have the potential to make a significant impact in climate change and health research.

The REACH Center leverages big data to research climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions that can improve health and equity. The REACH Center is a collaborative effort by George Washington University, George Mason University, Howard University, and the Environmental Defense Fund.

The GW Sustainability Research Institute (SRI) works across disciplines to address complex sustainability challenges facing society. Within this broad mandate, its members focus on issues of climate-health interactions, infrastructure, and energy.

About the Pilot Award Program

The REACH Center Pilot Grant Program aims to build capacity so that a new cohort of researchers and community partners will have the skills, connections, and research agendas to apply for National Institutes of Health R-level research grants using big data to explore healthful and equitable climate change solutions. This funding, open to multidisciplinary teams at George Washington, Howard, and George Mason universities, enables recipients to develop ideas, build partnerships, generate preliminary results, and advance toward larger-scale research support.

The REACH Center provided \$80,000 in funding for three awards. The SRI provided an additional \$60,000 to support two additional awards to GW-led teams. REACH and SRI share similar programmatic goals and aims, creating extensive opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration. Working together, they are able to do much more than what either group could do independently.

Selection Process & Criteria

In this inaugural round of the Pilot Award Program, we received nine complete applications from talented researchers. A selection committee consisting of experts from the REACH Center institutions, as well as two external reviewers from the University of Wisconsin's Health-First Climate Action Research Center, carefully evaluated the proposals. Review criteria included innovation, research approach, significance and impact, and potential for pilot work to lead to a subsequent successful grant application.

Meet the 2025 Pilot Award Grantees

We are honored to recognize the following teams as 2025 REACH Center Pilot Award recipients:

◆ **Xindi (Cindy) Hu (GW Environmental and Occupational Health); Judy Wang (GW Statistics); Tatiyana Apanasovich (GW Statistics)** – *Data-driven solutions to mitigate the impact of hurricanes on private well drinking water quality and human health*

This project integrates predictive tools, near real-time health data, and community collaboration to enhance resilience and disaster preparedness by safeguarding private wells, with a focus on private wells in North Carolina that were contaminated after Hurricane Helene.

◆ **Jenna R. Krall (GMU Global and Community Health); Marybeth Mitcham (GMU Global and Community Health); Luis E. Ortiz (GMU Atmospheric, Oceanic & Earth Sciences); Lucas R. F. Henneman (GMU Civil, Environmental, and Infrastructure Engineering)** – *Housing insecurity, climate risks, and health: A coalition for climate resiliency*

This project seeks to address the intersection of climate change and homelessness by examining how affordable housing policies can mitigate climate-related health risks, particularly air pollution and extreme heat, for unhoused and housing-insecure populations.

◆ **Vera Kuklina (GW Geography & Environment); Victoria Miles (Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center); Micah Hahn (University of Alaska Anchorage Environmental Health); Andrey Petrov (University of Northern Iowa Geography); Diana Khaziakhmetova (University of Arizona Geography, Development & Environment)**– *Climate-induced urban heat islands effect on public health in Arctic cities*

This project studies the effects of urban heat islands on public health in Fairbanks, Alaska, particularly among Indigenous communities, with the goal of informing solutions on the mitigation of climate change-induced public health effects in other cold cities.

In collaboration with the REACH Center, the Sustainability Research Institute announces the following awards:

◆ **John Paul Helveston (GW Engineering Management and Systems Engineering); Gaige Kerr (GW Environmental and Occupational Health)** – *Quantifying the air quality and environmental justice implications of disparities in access to clean vehicles*

This research will combine market analysis with environmental justice screening tools to investigate how disparities in access to clean vehicles contribute to inequitable air quality outcomes across U.S. communities.

◆ **Tatiyana Apanasovich (GW Statistics); Xindi (Cindy) Hu (GW Environmental and Occupational Health); Judy Wang (GW Statistics)** – *Building partnerships for equitable flood resilience: Exploring the intersection of social vulnerability, water quality, and health outcomes in Washington, D.C. and beyond*

This project combines multiple datasets from different D.C. agencies into a single, advanced model to examine the connections between flooding, water quality, and health outcomes in Washington, D.C., offering a framework for targeted, proactive interventions.

We are excited to see the impact of these projects as they progress. Seed grants provide a unique opportunity for grantees to explore new ideas, test innovative approaches, and lay the foundation of partnership and collaboration for future advancements. We look forward to supporting their journeys and sharing their successes with the broader community.

Acknowledgments

We extend our deepest gratitude to the selection committee for their time and dedication in reviewing applications. We also thank the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the GW Alliance for a Sustainable Future who make this program possible. Lastly, we recognize all applicants for their inspiring proposals and commitment to advancing research that bridges big data to climate solutions that improve health and equity.

Stay Connected

Visit the REACH Center [website](#) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) for updates on the progress of our grantees and future funding opportunities. If you are interested in applying for the next round of Pilot Awards, stay tuned for upcoming announcements!
