

# CALL FOR GROUP PROJECTS 2024-2025



## From experimentation to innovation: supporting change in cities and regions

Academic year 2024-2025

On 14 June 2023, the **1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Urban School Lab Day** took place: 40 group projects, 170 students at the heart of the debate, 500 participants including partners, teachers, tutors, and alumni, 'friends' of this Urban School that wants to make dialogue between its different communities its strength and its anchoring.

The day made **experimentation its 'playground'**: testing new teaching formats, crossing themes and territorial scales, and learning from students' reflections, discoveries, and comparative analyses. The Lab returns for its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition on 11 June, where new forms of encounters will be proposed, always with the common thread of a desire for shared public knowledge driven by our student community.

However, this new approach to education refers to a broader concept, which we would like to highlight in our call for 2024 group projects: **the virtues of experimentation as a lever for innovation**. A "successful" experiment, i.e., one that finds a market or an audience, can become stable and have a lasting impact on the substantive content of the projects, policies, infrastructures, and services offered by cities and regions. Experimentation helps to evaluate alternatives and test design hypotheses, *ultimately* strengthening the capacity of

cities and regions to adapt to change and pursue ambitious social and environmental objectives.

There needs to be more than the widespread use of experimentation, or at least its increasing evocation in the urban world, to meet this need for social, institutional, or political innovation. We also need to provide the tools to support the initiatives taken by public and private players in these areas. In other words, we need to have recourse to the comparative social sciences and develop a capacity for astonishment and distancing to shed light on innovation processes. It is precisely the ambition of the group projects conducted by the students at the Urban School at Sciences Po to help urban and regional players - public, private, and associative - to learn from their collective experiments to implement stable and robust innovations.

Change in towns and cities is difficult but possible. Reflexivity enables us to draw out the best of experimentation so that it is not wasted and becomes an essential vector for transformation and recognisable social and political innovation in the public space as well as in all the less visible dimensions that make up the quality of places and links, services and infrastructures in towns and cities.

# GROUP PROJECTS AT THE ECOLE URBAINE DE SCIENCES PO: SHINING A LIGHT ON CHANGE

## The two objectives of a group project

The Urban School trains professionals to transform cities and regions by equipping them with theoretical and operational, critical, and comparative knowledge. Students are trained in the social sciences and take a multidisciplinary approach to territorial issues. By analysing and comparing urban dynamics in France, Europe and internationally, they develop the ability to **design, implement, support, and evaluate public policies and complex projects in cities and regions.**

An innovative teaching module central to all our courses, the group project makes experience in the field and collaboration with real partners an exceptional lever for professionalisation. It encourages negotiation, respect for constraints, and decision-making.

To inform decisions, develop policies or strategies, or support change within an

organisation, the work resulting from our projects is a genuine process of reflection and action, mobilising the knowledge, know-how, and, above all, the energy and commitment of our students, under the demanding guidance of the Urban School and its tutors. Along with the desire for professionalism, this is the second objective of our group projects: to **produce new knowledge that is useful for action.**



Group projects lend themselves particularly well to research, diagnosis, forecasting, comparative analysis and even preparation for evaluation, and more generally, to any issue that can shed light on the organisation concerned from an R&D

perspective. What makes them unique is that they are carried out by students who bring not only their academic skills but also, above all, a fresh, outside view of operational issues as young professionals in the making. They are an educational process, not a service.

## Themes of the call for projects

This call for projects is based on experimentation and remains open, integrating a territorial dimension without targeting specific themes. As a guide, we have provided a few guidelines that are central to the school's educational project:

- Territorial governance and complex project management
- Ecological transition and transformation trajectories in the face of climate change
- Cities and regions facing up to demographic change
- Mobilisation and collective action in the field of economic and social policies, combating poverty and living together
- Public health and regions
- Local policies to prevent and combat discrimination

- Cities and genres
- Developments in urban infrastructure and services (energy, water, waste, etc.)
- Developments in urban planning, mobility, and real estate
- Housing uses and policies
- Digital strategies for cities and regions
- Developments in the land economy, from ZAN to taking account of living soil

### **How a group project works**

In **initial training**, each project involves a group of 4 or 5 first-year students from one of the Urban School's Masters courses. The students in the group work between 1.5 and 2 days a week (in dedicated time slots, with no other concurrent teaching) for 6 to 9 months (depending on the concerned Master's programs). The timetables are as follows:

- For the 'Stratégies Territoriales et Urbaines', 'Cycle d'Urbanisme' and 'Governing Ecological Transitions in Cities' Masters' programs, the group projects start in October and finish in June of the following year,
- For the "Governing the Large Metropolis" Master's program, the group projects start in January and finish in June (the group projects in this Master's program, therefore, require a methodology adapted to a tighter timetable).

In **continuing education**, group projects are organised within the 'Territorial Governance and Urban Development' executive master's program. Each project mobilises a group of students for 50 hours per person, over dedicated time slots, without any other concurrent teaching, for four months, from January to June (the methodology is adapted to a tighter timetable).

For all projects, each group appoints a coordinator from among its members, who acts as a point of contact for the partner. An experienced professional tutor supervises the group, recruited for the occasion by the School as a part-time higher education employee, with the partner's agreement, once the question of potential conflicts of interest has been checked and ruled out. The project is supervised by a School team member, who is ultimately responsible for its progress. The stakeholders meet in a decision-making body such as the **Steering Committee**.

The objectives and terms of the project are defined on the presentation sheet sent with the application (*see below*). The form can be reworked with the Urban School or the Executive Education teaching team before launching the project.

The urban school must be involved at three specific points: the project's launch, the mid-term Steering Committee meeting, and the closing Steering Committee meeting. The partner, group, or tutor can call upon it as and when required.



The mandatory renderings for group projects are as follows:

- At the latest, one month after the launch, **a problem and methodology note**, including a presentation of the issues, the project objectives, details of the investigations to be carried out, and a back schedule.
- As part of the mid-term Steering Committee, **an interim report** will be presented, containing a review of the literature and/or a state-of-the-art/benchmark and the results of initial field investigations.
- As part of the final Steering Committee meeting, **a final report** presenting the group's conclusions and including a critical review of what has been achieved and where there is room for improvement, plus a summary for publication and dissemination.
- Steering committee documents and associated minutes.
- A project summary as part of the "Urban School Lab Day" (*see below*).

Validation of the project is a compulsory course requirement for obtaining the diploma. The Urban School has full authority to validate the project, taking into account feedback from the partner, the students, and the tutor.

The work's intellectual property is shared between the Urban School, the students, and the partner. Any public mention of the project must reference the students who carried it out. Where explicitly required by the partner, students and tutors are bound by a confidentiality clause.

## THE URBAN SCHOOL LAB DAY: A KEY OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE OUR GROUP PROJECTS

The strategy for promoting the group projects is planned and decided by the stakeholders at the latest at the mid-term Steering Committee meeting. In addition to the compulsory written reports mentioned above, and with the agreement of the Urban School and the partners, it can take a wide variety of forms depending on the subject: articles and publications, podcasts and other audiovisual formats, participation in conferences, webinars, creation of or participation in exhibitions, partnership, or public meetings, etc. The work resulting from the group project is used to provide content for these different formats. Still, publishing, communication and the organisation of events remain the full responsibility of the partner, except for events and publications directly organised by the Urban School's LAB.



Except for certain subjects whose confidentiality prevents them from being disseminated

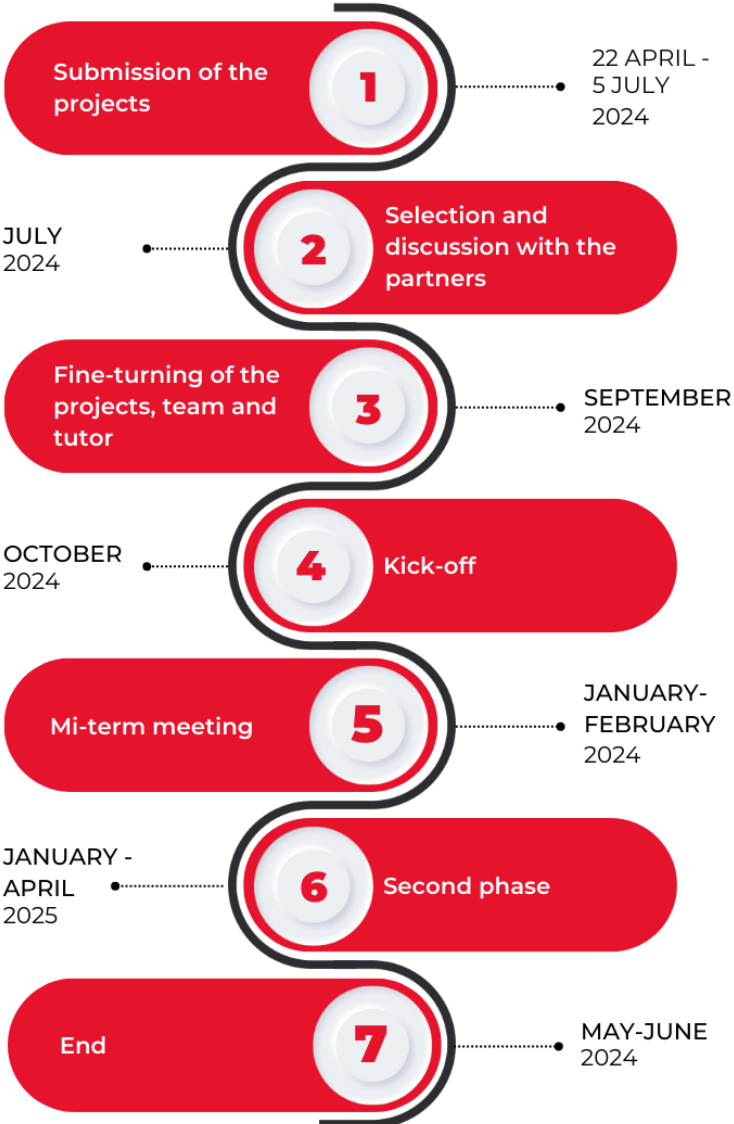


(subject to prior discussion with the partner), the final reports of group projects will be collected and made available in Sciences Po's new digital library, which will be launched in spring 2024.

Finally, in June each year, the Urban School Lab organises an event open to the public to present and promote the results of the forty or so group projects carried out during the academic

year. The workshops aim to provide cross-presentations of the main results of the group projects in the presence of the tutors who have supported the students during the year and the Urban School's institutional partners.

# TIMELINE OF GROUP PROJECTS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES\* (IN FRENCH ONLY)



*\*Calendar only valid for the "Stratégies Territoriales et Urbaines", "Cycle d'urbanisme" and "Governing Ecological Transitions in Cities" master's courses.*

Applications must be sent to the Urban School by e-mail **from 22 April 2024 and by 5 July 2024 at the latest** for projects concerning the "Territorial and Urban Strategies", "Urban Planning Cycle" and "Governing Ecological Transitions in Cities" masters degrees, as well as for the "Territorial Governance and Urban Development" executive master's degree. Applications for the "Governing the Large Metropolis" master's program, which will start later, can be submitted until 30 November 2024. If future partners have any questions about the type of Master's degree they should choose for a project, please get in touch with us.

Applications for initial training Masters' programs group projects should be sent by e-mail to the following three addresses:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="mailto:ilaria.milazzo@sciencespo.fr">ilaria.milazzo@sciencespo.fr</a> (executive director)</li><li>- <a href="mailto:bertrand.vallet@sciencespo.fr">bertrand.vallet@sciencespo.fr</a> (Lab manager)</li><li>- <a href="mailto:sandrine.boisard@sciencespo.fr">sandrine.boisard@sciencespo.fr</a> (head of legal and financial affairs)</li></ul> |
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For the Executive Committee, applications should also be sent by e-mail to the following two addresses:

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="mailto:charlotte.halpern@sciencespo.fr">charlotte.halpern@sciencespo.fr</a> (scientific manager)</li><li>- <a href="mailto:alexia.krief@sciencespo.fr">alexia.krief@sciencespo.fr</a> (programme manager)</li></ul> |
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**Applications take the form of a presentation note (document p.9).**

An initial project selection committee is held in July, and a second is held at the end of November for the 'Governing the Large Metropolis' Master's program only. The committee pays particular attention to the diversity of the proposed themes and sectors of activity.

The committee is sovereign. It will base its decision on the following criteria:

- The strategic and operational dimension of the issues raised by the partner, in close connection with the students' course of study
- A good understanding of the teaching system and what it presupposes, i.e. an R&D and critical analysis approach entrusted to students
- The organisation's ability to monitor the project, in particular by appointing a contact person to meet the students and provide them with the data and information they need for their work,
- The clarity of the partner's expectations in terms of the project's output and added value.

The committee will pay particular attention to possible conflicts of interest. **Under no circumstances** may a group project be associated with providing **services, consultancy, or a partisan approach**. The group project aims to produce a form of accessible public knowledge.

## **CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

The call for group projects is open to all legal entities, whether public, private or associative, based in France or abroad, except for partisan, trade union or religious organisations, in the interests of neutrality.

The selected partners are being asked to provide financial support for the Urban School's teaching activities (support which may, for eligible organisations, take the form of sponsorship), up to a maximum of €16,000 for the Stratégies Territoriales et Urbaines and Governing Ecological Transitions in European Cities master's degrees and €21,000 for the *Cycle d'urbanisme* master's program.

For the *Governing Large Metropolis* master's degree and the *Territorial Governance and Urban Development* executive master's degree, please get in touch with the course leaders directly, as the timetable has been postponed.

Sciences Po will cover all the costs involved in the group project, including supervision costs and students' travel and mission expenses. The partners' financial support is also intended to develop certain training activities, such as study trips for Urban School students, and initiatives to develop skills specific to group projects (graphic design, cartography, urban data modeling, project management, techniques for drafting strategic recommendations, etc.).



**GROUP PROJECT BETWEEN THE URBAN SCHOOL AND XXXXXXXX  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025  
PROJECT TITLE: "XXXXXXXXXXXX".**

**Date:**

**Name of partner (structure):**

**Name of referee:**

**Project title:**

**What are the strategic and operational issues behind the applicant organisation's request to carry out a group project?**

**What are the questions posed to the students and the expected results of the group project for the organisation?**

**What methodology and phasing are envisaged at this stage?**

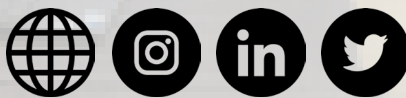
**What types of output are required? How will it be promoted?**

**What organisation is proposed to monitor the project within the applicant organisation?**

**In short, why entrust this process to students at the Urban School?**

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