



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

MEMORANDUM

To: COG Board of Directors

From: Dave Robertson

Date: July 14, 2010

Subject: National Capital Region's Application for the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant

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Bowie
College Park
Frederick
Frederick County
Gaithersburg
Greenbelt
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Rockville
Takoma Park
Alexandria
Arlington County
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Fairfax County
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Loudoun County
Manassas
Manassas Park
Prince William County

**Adjunct member*

Proposal Summary

The National Capital Region is pursuing federal grant funding to create a *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* to implement the goals of *Region Forward: A Comprehensive Guide for Regional Planning*.

Grant funding would allow Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) staff, consultants and partners to carry out the planning effort, with direction from a Coalition representing the local government members of the COG and Transportation Planning Board, along with nonprofits, educational institutions, and other key stakeholders. The final product will be a *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* that meets the requirements of the Federal Government's Sustainable Communities Initiative, implements the next steps identified in *Region Forward*, and serves as a guide for citizens and decision makers.

Congress authorized the Sustainable Communities Initiative to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure. Successful plans should guide regional and local decisions in ways that use limited infrastructure resources more efficiently, enhance quality of life, and support regional economies.

*Local communities
 will be encouraged to
 think regionally
 and act locally*

In many ways, the timing could not be better. The National Capital Region has just finished a regional goal-setting process to articulate accessibility, livability, sustainability, and prosperity targets as part of *Region Forward*. The Sustainable Communities grant requirements are in line with *Region Forward's* recommended next steps, including additional regional planning and consensus building.

The *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* will focus on building “complete communities” that will emulate successful transit oriented developments in the region. This complete communities approach will build upon COG’s previous activity centers planning by finding ways to enhance existing centers and create new ones. These complete communities will be strategically located, planned and developed to reduce economic disparities and bring prosperity to diverse areas of the region.

The complete communities approach recognizes that where you live defines how you live. Access to fresh food, public transit, education, affordable housing, jobs, and recreation differ dramatically by community and neighborhood. With the region’s population projected to grow at a rapid pace over the next 20 years, we can and must do better.

Each complete community will meet livability goals by supporting affordable housing, job creation, human health, sustainable development, and transportation access. Each will be planned and developed in a way that supports and values the diversity and complexity of communities in the National Capital Region. Local communities will be encouraged to think regionally and act locally by adopting a tailored approach to implementing the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. This will be accomplished through extensive public outreach and facilitation of alliances between regional and local interests.

In addition, the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* will help the National Capital Region compete for limited infrastructure funds, create efficiency gains by breaking down administrative silos, and address environmental concerns related to climate change and growth. In an environment of scarce funding, public agencies everywhere are attempting to apply creative solutions that make the most efficient use of public dollars while improving the region’s quality of life.

Purpose and Need

Preferred Sustainability Status and Eligibility for Future Federal Funds

All applicants achieving a specified threshold score in their submission for the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program will qualify for Preferred Sustainability Status, which signifies that the region is ready to advance planning that prioritizes sustainability and inclusion as core outcomes of community development. Applicants will qualify for a broad spectrum of benefits, including access to capacity building resources, and secure points in a number of funding opportunities managed by other federal agencies such as HUD, DOT, and EPA. Applicants receiving the Preferred Sustainability Status that do not receive funds in this funding round will be able to preserve certain aspects of their application for next year's competition.

Uniting the Region by Planning and Allocating Resources More Efficiently

Administrative silos, redundant processes, and political challenges too often prevent the region from reaching its full potential—a potential that can only be achieved through collaboration and cooperation. Regional planning is both the forum and the tool for uniting diverse interests in the common pursuit of improved quality of life and economic competitiveness. To be competitive at the national level for scarce federal resources and private sector investment, the region must think and act strategically in how it creates first class infrastructure and communities that attract high-paying jobs and new residents.

The federal, multi-agency Sustainable Communities Initiative has recognized this fact. The Initiative has noted that there are clear opportunities to make major efficiency gains through improved regional planning and coordination. For this reason, the Initiative made the regional planning grants available to encourage coordinated regional planning efforts.

These efficiency gains are needed now more than ever. This region, like many others, has suffered from the current economic recession. High rates of foreclosures and unemployment are overburdening local governments in a period of sharp declines in local revenues. In an environment of scarce funding, public agencies throughout the region are attempting to apply creative solutions that make the most efficient use of public dollars and still improve the region's quality of life.

Healthy Communities, Improved Economies, and Quality of Life

Where you live defines how you live. Access to opportunities- fresh food, public transit, education, affordable housing, jobs, and recreation- all the things that define one's quality of life, differ by community and neighborhood. These factors dramatically affect human health and quality of life. The metropolitan Washington region's economy ranks 5th nationally and yet, we have significant socioeconomic disparities that cut across jurisdictional boundaries. With the region's population projected to grow at a rapid pace over the next 20 years, we can and must do better. Without a strategic *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*, gaps among the haves and the have-nots will continue to widen resulting in ongoing public health, economic and social impacts affecting our residents' quality of life.

Building a Sustainable Future and Resilient Energy Economy

The coming decades will continue to be a time of uncertainty with dramatic changes in the environment and the cost of energy. Energy, climate, and environmental concerns are already having profound effects on our region. The National Capital Region recognizes its role in transitioning our built environment and scaling new reliable low-carbon energy alternatives to build a sustainable future. By planning and channeling future growth and development into sustainable centers and corridors, improving infrastructure, and improving housing, zoning, development and building codes, the National Capital Region can reduce carbon emissions and dependence on imported fuels, improve water and air quality, and maintain land available for agriculture, recreation, and sensitive environmental needs.

Capacity

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is uniquely positioned to lead the regional planning efforts necessary to address HUD's sustainability and livability goals. COG is a regional association of 21 local governments in the National Capital Region, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. COG is 53 years old and has a long history of leadership and management of regional planning programs and initiatives.

COG is also the host agency for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) the region's federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) providing key regional transportation planning resources to the region's local governments. The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region. The TPB became associated with the COG in 1966. Although the TPB is an independent body, its staff is provided by COG's Department of Transportation Planning. COG is also a close partner of the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), the agency responsible for building and operating the primary regional transit system.

COG is supported by financial contributions from its participating local governments, federal and state grants and contracts, and donations from foundations and the private sector. Policies are set by the full membership acting through its board of directors, which meets monthly to discuss issues. These financial and in-kind contributions provided by participating local governments can be used toward the required 20 percent local match or in-kind contributions for the Sustainable Communities Grant Program.

As the administrative body representing local governments on coordinated regional land use, housing, and environmental planning as well as the associated metropolitan planning organization for transportation, COG represents the diverse jurisdictional and topical interests that can implement the goals of the HUD sustainable communities grant.

Background

Congress authorized the multi-agency Sustainable Communities Initiative to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase the capacity to improve land use and zoning. As part of this initiative, grants of up to \$5,000,000 are available for large metropolitan areas, such as the National Capital Region, to help complete a *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. The grant program is highly competitive. It is likely that there will be many more metropolitan areas applying for grants than there are funds available.

There are two important requirements for the grant program. First, the application requires the formation of a multi-jurisdictional consortium including the COG, MPO, local jurisdictions representing at least 50 percent of the metropolitan area population, and at least one non-profit or educational institution to administer the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. Second, the consortium must provide a minimum of a 20 percent funding match in the form of cash or in-kind contributions.

A *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* is a regional planning effort that integrates housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact. The Regional Plan will be created with the purpose of guiding regional and local decision making to allocate more efficient use of limited infrastructure resources, enhance the quality of life and support the economic competitiveness of the region.

Application Timeline

July 7, 2010: CAOs Committee briefing
 July 14, 2010: COG Board and MDPC Review and Approval
 July 21, 2010: TPB and CEEPC Review and Approval
 July 30, 2010: HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Task Force Meeting
 August 19, 2010: HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Task Force Meeting
 August 23, 2010: Grant Submission Due

Overview of Regional Plan for Sustainable Development

The National Capital Region is applying for HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Category 2 grant funding to build on the work of *Region Forward* and create a *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* with a detailed execution plan and program. The National Capital Region's *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* will further the work already accomplished in *Region Forward* by integrating housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact. The Regional Plan will be created with the purpose of guiding regional and local decisions to allocate more efficient use of limited infrastructure resources, enhance the quality of life and support the economic competitiveness of the region.

Complete Communities: Sustainable Centers and Corridors

The primary framework for implementing *Region Forward* and creating an executable *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* is to develop complete communities across the region through sustainable centers and corridors. These sustainable centers and corridors will emulate the successful transit oriented developments in the region. They will take the activity centers identified in *Region Forward* to the next level by enhancing existing centers and creating new ones. They will be strategically located, planned and developed at the regional level to reduce economic disparities, improve human health, and bring prosperity to diverse areas of the region.

Each sustainable center and corridor will be a complete community that meets livability goals by supporting affordable housing, job creation, human health, sustainable development, and transportation access. These centers will be identified through an integrated regional planning process to prioritize transportation, environment, and housing resources with a focus on regional equity. Once regionally identified, Centers should be planned and developed locally in a way that supports and values the existing community context and the variety and complexity of the National Capital Region. Taking a cue from the "complete streets" approach, the regional planning process will identify a number of attributes such as energy efficiency, transit access, housing and affordable housing, educational opportunities, jobs, walkable streets, and other factors that make a center complete while still respecting an urban, suburban, and rural character.

Centers are expected to contain a number of sustainability or livability attributes that may already exist, need future planning resources to consider including such attributes while balancing a community's character and needs, and some centers may already have plans in place

and just need capital funding to implement specific attributes. The integrated regional planning effort will identify these localized complete community needs as regional priorities in a *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*, and position these places for more efficient local and federal funding for transportation, housing, and the environment. This will be accomplished through extensive public outreach and facilitation of alliances between regional and local interests.

The *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* will serve as a guide for local, regional, and state governmental policies and investments. The Regional Plan and planning process will give special attention on how to guide the integration of land use plans, consolidated housing plans, the region's fiscally constrained long range transportation plan, water, open space and land conservation plans, and economic development planning. The integrated Regional Plan will include the following elements:

A Regional Housing Plan

The housing plan element will conduct a housing supply and demand assessment. The analysis will be used to develop a regional housing tool to assess locations where future housing and affordable housing are needed to balance regional inequities. The housing tool would be updated to benchmark and assess regional growth and affordable housing distribution. The housing tool would use weighted factors such as proximity to transit, existing household growth and employment growth, and projected household and employment growth in sustainable centers. The analysis of these trends would also be used as part of the scenario planning process to help the public better understand the connection between the cost of housing and transportation and the relationship of housing growth patterns on our environmental infrastructure. Through the regional scenario process and extensive public involvement the housing density of centers will be determined as part of the public's preferred regional growth scenario.

A Regional Transportation Plan

The transportation element will address the development of transportation networks tied to sustainable centers and corridors. The plan will address using sustainable centers and corridors to expand transportation choices, including quality bus service, street cars, light rail, regional rail, ridesharing, express bus lanes, shuttle services, complete streets, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, and programs that offer alternatives to driving alone, such as rideshare or public transit incentives. The transportation plan will address aligning and prioritizing needed regional investments that support sustainable centers and corridors in conjunction with the Constrained Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. The plan element will address how existing and future transportation infrastructure should be maintained and designed to ensure improved air quality, reduced per capita greenhouse gas and particulate emissions, reduced travel times, greater transit supportive development (incorporating, to the degree possible, the full range of housing affordable to all ranges of family income), reduced runoff from roads, improved service for historically marginalized populations, viable alternatives to automobile ownership, and access for the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as planning for the creation/expansion of appropriate paratransit services.

Water Infrastructure Planning

The water infrastructure planning element will ensure that investments in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems support sustainable regional growth patterns over the long term and improve water quality of local streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. This will involve a regional evaluation of water infrastructure, water supplies and demand, water quality problems affecting water supply, and social and economic characteristics of the region. It will examine how sustainable centers and corridors can be used to improve water quality and infrastructure. Sustainable centers and corridors can become priority areas for stormwater retrofits and other coordinated investments in pursuit of sustainability goals, cost efficiency, and livable communities. Key elements will include assessment, alternatives analysis and implementation of programs and practices to improve water use efficiency or appropriately reuse water, and evaluation of the surface water quality impacts and environmental requirements of water, transportation, and housing infrastructure solutions.

Environmental Planning

The environmental plan element will evaluate the impact of land use decisions; strategies to avoid adverse environmental impacts on neighborhoods through the careful planning and siting of housing and community facilities; methods to prevent undue damage, unwise use, or unwarranted consumption of natural resources; strategies to mimic natural systems within the built environment so as to minimize environmental impacts; strategies to equalize access to environmental amenities and minimize burdens resulting from development; specific actions to redress persistent environmental justice concerns in communities; tactics for sustainable water, wastewater, and materials management; measures for advanced energy planning and conservation; protection of natural areas; and measures to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related requirements.

A food desert analysis will be conducted to investigate whether the National Capital Region has low-income areas lacking access to supermarkets. This analysis would investigate whether there is more generally a pattern of unequal supermarket access between higher and lower-income areas, or across areas with different demographic characteristics. The analysis would help inform the spatial needs for access to grocery stores in sustainable centers. Supermarkets included in the study shall sell a range of products including fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy and meat, and be part of a local or national distribution system. The food desert analysis will be linked to how existing and future population settlements exist and area expected. The analysis will also identify potential local food production sites such as community gardens.

Green infrastructure assessment will be conducted as part of the environmental analysis. This assessment will identify undeveloped lands most critical to the region's long-term ecological health. These lands should be identified as being able to support diverse plant and animal populations, and enable valuable natural processes like filtering water and cleaning the air. This identification process will be examined in the context of a future baseline population and housing growth projections to help the public understand the impacts of how other human infrastructure such as housing and transportation may impact natural lands important for supporting animal and plant life, recreation, air and water filtration. If the current built environment creates existing gaps in the natural system, examine strategies for mitigating gaps through actions like green rooftops or enhancing the tree canopy.

Economic Development The economic development planning effort will be focused on economic assets and job creation. This will focus on the creation or expansion of sustainable centers and corridors that: serve as commercial and industrial centers; reuse existing areas such as brownfields; utilize existing structures for new economic development ventures; creatively reuse vacant property; designate underutilized commercial and industrial space to accommodate arts-related enterprises; establish cultural districts or other opportunities for the creative sector to partner with business, civic, and diverse community leaders; create microenterprises and small business incubators; and further the inclusion of underrepresented populations in economic sectors. This planning component will examine full utilization of existing programs to advance economic opportunity, such as the HUD Section 3 program; innovative project financing; and training to support the full range of workforce and worker needs in the region. It will also include scenario planning that allows the RPSD to project a variety of economic growth possibilities and anticipate responses to each of them.

Climate Change

The climate impacts assessments will focus on urban heat island effect and sea level rise. This assessment will help inform how regional sustainable centers and corridors can be used to both help mitigate and adapt to areas of special concern in the region. The analysis will summarize risk assessment techniques and scientific literature available on expected climate conditions in the Washington region, such as projected changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level rise, extreme weather events. Additionally the climate assessment will determine the main areas, practices, and economic sectors at risk for the Washington region. Based on the scientific review, maps will be developed to illustrate the potential climate change impacts on transportation, building, water, job centers and regional population centers. This assessment will use future population and housing growth projections to determine where sea level rise and heat island impacts are expected in public forums to help residents understand climate impacts as they relate to housing and population growth patterns.

Plan Recommendations

All integrated plan elements will include recommendations related to the following:

- Identification of immediate and long-term policies including local land use, building, and energy codes, infrastructure investment, administrative procedures, and legislative proposals that influence where growth and development take place, including the type, intensity, and timing of economic and housing development, environmental protection, and investment in transportation and water facilities and services. These actions should be focused around implementation in a variety of sustainable centers and corridors representing the diverse development patterns of the region.
- Methods for aligning infrastructure investment with goals to ensure equitable land use planning
- Ways to ensure public decision-making and meaningful resident participation
- Identification of measures to track the progress toward creating sustainable, complete communities
- Structural methods to strengthen regional and local management and decision-making capacities
- Improvements to administrative and regulatory processes
- Revisions in state statutes or local government charters or regulations that govern or control local government operations so that the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development can be enabled, financed, and implemented

Support for recommendations will be provided by technical planning studies concerning local development issues, priorities, suggested new approaches to housing, economic development, capital improvement programming, and community relations to further the integration of local objectives with broader regional concerns consistent with the Livability Principles.

Proposed Planning Process:

Plan Timeline	Win Yr 1	Spr Yr 1	Sum Yr 1	Fall Yr 1	Win Yr 2	Spr Yr 2	Sum Yr 2	Fall Yr 2	Win Yr 3	Spr Yr 3	Sum Yr 3	Fall Yr 3
Build on the Regional Vision	→											
Assessment Phase: Challenges & Strategies		→										
Scenario Planning & Public Engagement			→									
Plan Implementation & Activities									→			
Finalize & Adopt Plan										→		
Plan Alignment											→	

Step 1: Build on the Regional Vision

Region Forward: A Comprehensive Guide for Regional Planning articulates a regional vision for the National Capital Region. The vision will guide the recommendations for the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. A number of early public workshops will present *Region Forward* to the broader public and refine recommendations for the Regional Sustainable Development Plan

Step 2: Assessment Phase: Challenges & Strategies

Partner organizations as part of the Consortium will utilize existing analysis or study additional topics needed to complete the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. Such topics might include an analysis of existing housing needs and projections, green infrastructure gaps, jobs-housing mismatch, and criteria for Centers and Corridors. The Consortium will conduct technical planning studies concerning local development issues, new approaches to housing, economic development, capital improvement programming, or community relations to further the integration of local objectives with broader regional concerns consistent with the Livability Principles and *Region Forward*.

Step 3: Scenario Planning and Public Engagement

The Consortium will create several alternative scenarios for the region's development, each combining a number of trends and strategies that show different implications on livability. Engagement will include public discourse on the effects on transportation, health, the environment, the economy, climate and other required plan elements. The scenario planning will focus on region-wide concerns with special attention on sustainable centers and corridors. Through this process the public will choose a preferred regional growth scenario for the National Capital Region.

Step 4: Plan Implementation & Activities

The Consortium will explore revisions in state statutes or local government charters or regulations that govern or control local operations so that the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* can be enable, financed and implemented. Furthermore, this stage will include recommendations for administrative or regulatory measures for jurisdictions participating in the

plan, the metropolitan planning organization and/or other special districts or regional agencies as part of the plan.

Step 5: Finalize & Adopt Regional Sustainable Development Plan

Finalize the Sustainable Development Plan with all existing requirements including the Centers and Corridors Map, green infrastructure, strategies, administrative regulatory measures, metrics, housing database and other elements. The Consortium will then pursue plan adoption through COG Board and TPB.

Step 6: Plan Alignment

The MPO, states, counties and local governments will identify the appropriate programming of capital improvements, financing plans, major expenditures for public facilities, utilities, transportation infrastructure, energy management, land conservation and water infrastructure. This will also include a regional consolidated plan amendment.

Financial Summary

An estimated cost of the proposed *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development* would be approximately \$5-6 million. A total cash or in-kind contribution match of 20 percent is required. Depending on support from Consortium partners, in-kind contributions may increase up to 50 percent to make the grant more competitive. The higher percent of in-kind support or cash match, the more points a region will score on its application proposal.

Governance

Federal Requirements

The NOFA for this HUD program requires an applicant to form a consortium that, at a minimum, will include: a) the “traditional principal city,” b) the unit of local government with the largest population, c) additional units of local government representing no less than 50 percent of the population, d) the region’s MPO or regional planning agency, and e) a nonprofit organization, foundation or educational institution that has the capacity to engage a diverse representation of the general population and the ability to work in partnership with the units of general local government and the MPOs.

A partnership agreement, MOU or other proof of commitment to work together must be submitted with the application, and must be executed by all consortium members. The agreement must state that a formal consortium agreement will be executed within 120 days of grant start date. The consortium agreement must state timetables for which things will be executed by each partner. The lead applicant must sign MOUs with each partner. Successful applicants will be required to reach out to each PHA within its area to obtain their partnership for full participation for the required housing plans.

Proposed Governance Structure

In its application, COG intends to go above and beyond the federal requirements by including a broad cross-section of public- and private-sector stakeholders representing a sizeable majority of the region’s population.

COG will act as the **Lead Applicant** for the grant. If the application is successful, COG will serve as the agency responsible for coordinating and managing the planning activities resulting in the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. As lead applicant, COG shall execute the cooperative agreement with HUD and will assume fiscal responsibility for the grant on behalf of the consortium.

Consortium

The **Consortium** overseeing the three-year planning effort will comprise a broad cross-section of public- and private-sector stakeholders. COG itself, along with the TPB, CEEPC, and MWAQC will be members of the consortium. In addition, COG will reach out to a wide spectrum of potential consortium members to seek written agreement for participation. Potential members will include all of COG's member jurisdictions and any appropriate agencies of those jurisdictions including PHAs; other key agencies such as NCPC or WMATA; and representatives from non-profit, university and business organizations. Efforts will be made to ensure consortium participants include a representative cross-section of the region, including balanced representation from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia, balanced representation from the region's core, inner jurisdictions and outer jurisdictions, and significant representation from traditionally disadvantaged communities.

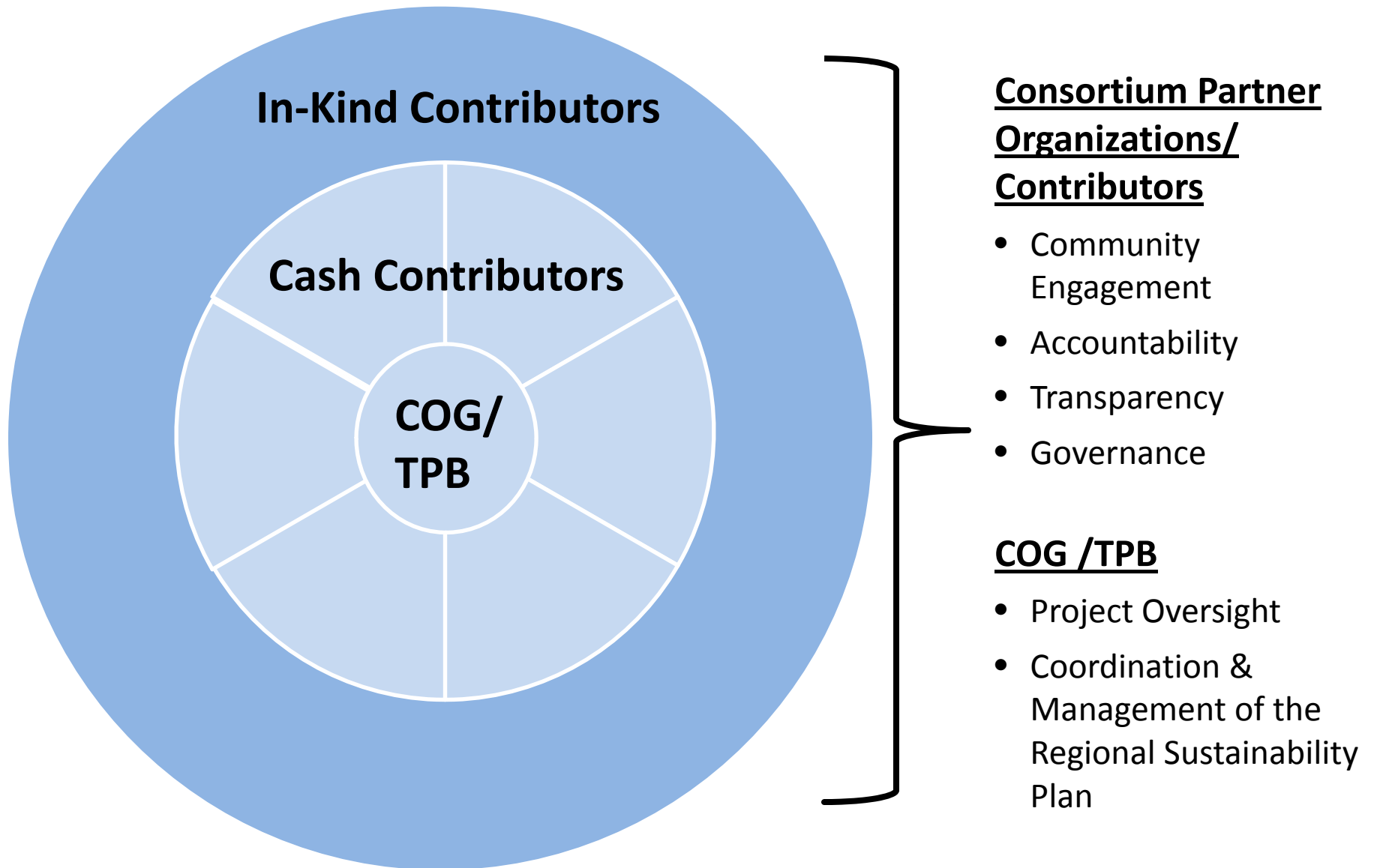
The application will identify **Partner Organizations** to be part of the Consortium that will provide a 20-percent cash and in-kind match and in return will receive funding and will be responsible for providing services under the project. The inclusion of such partners will demonstrate the region's commitment to developing the plan through a collaborative process.

Planning Commission

A **Planning Commission**, consisting of no more than 15 representatives of the Consortium, will oversee the development of the *Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*. The Planning Commission will provide regular guidance on the substance and management of the planning process, and will authorize subcommittees to perform detailed tasks.

COG staff will assume responsibility for managing and executing most tasks in the development of the plan. A full-time **project director** at COG will manage the project under the supervision of a management team comprising the COG executive director and department directors responsible for community planning, transportation and environment. Under the project director, a full-time **planning team coordinator** will be responsible for coordinating the work of teams working on various components of the plan, including work related to individual sectors such as housing, transportation, and environment. **Consultants** may be contracted to provide specialized services, such as assistance with public engagement.

COG Sustainable Communities Consortium



COG Sustainable Communities Governance Chart

