

Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant NOFA Summary

Program Description

Congress provided a total of \$100 million to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions and increase state, regional, and local capacity to incorporate livability, sustainability and social equity values into land use plans.

Purpose of the Regional Planning Grant Program

Support metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments.

Consider following interdependent challenges:

- economic competitiveness and revitalization;
- social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity;
- energy use and climate change;
- public health and environmental impact

Transform Livability Principles into strategies that direct long-term development and reinvestment, demonstrate a commitment to addressing issues of regional significance, utilize data to set and monitor progress toward performance goals, and engage stakeholders and citizens in meaningful decision-making roles.

Funding will Support

The development and implementation of A Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) that:

- Clearly define a single, integrated plan for regional development that addresses potential population growth or decline over a minimum 20-year time frame, sets appropriate 3 to 5 year benchmark performance targets, and delineates strategies to meet established performance goals;
- Establish performance goals and measures that are at a minimum, consistent with the Sustainability Partnership's Livability Principles;
- Utilize geo-coded data sets and other metrics in developing, implementing, monitoring, and assessing the performance goals of various reinvestment scenarios;
- Provide detailed plans, policies, and implementation strategies to be implemented by all participating jurisdictions over time to meet planning goals
- Prioritize projects that facilitate implementation of the regional plan and identify responsible implementing entities and funding sources;
- Show how the proposed plan will establish consistency with HUD, DOT, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) programs, and policies, such as Consolidated Plans, Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, Long Range Transportation Plans, and Asset Management Plans, including strategies to modify existing plans, where appropriate and shall evaluate how each plan can or should be integrated to benefit the region;
- Engage residents and stakeholders substantively and meaningfully in the development of the shared vision and its implementation early and throughout the process, including communities traditionally marginalized from such processes, while accommodating limited English speakers, persons with disabilities and the elderly

Program Goals

1. Foster the development of sustainable communities throughout the United States that are consistent with the following Livability Principles
 - a. *Provide More Transportation Choices*. Develop safe, reliable, and affordable transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce energy consumption and dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
 - b. *Promote equitable, affordable housing*. Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
 - c. *Enhance Economic Competitiveness*. Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services, and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
 - d. *Support Existing Communities*. Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
 - e. *Coordinate Policies and Leverage Investment*. Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
 - f. *Value Communities and Neighborhoods*. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.
2. Support metropolitan areas and multijurisdictional partnerships that adopt integrated plans, strategies, and management tools to become more sustainable
3. Facilitate strong alliances of residents and regional interest groups that are able to maintain a long-term vision for a region over time and simultaneously support progress through sustainable development practices
4. Build greater transparency and accountability into planning and implementation efforts
5. Expedite implementation of the Livability Principles through changes in local zoning and land use laws and regulations that remove barriers to sustainable development for housing, economic development, transportation, and related water, sewer, and other environmental quality issues.
6. Align local, state, and tribal capital improvement programs with Livability Principles
7. Assist all regions to move toward sustainability and livability and prepare them for implementation and to demonstrate on-the-ground results.

Preferred Sustainability Status

Applicants achieving a specified threshold score in their submission for the 2010 round of 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 that meet this criterion 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.

Program Outcomes

A generation of regional plans that are configured to produce the following:

1. Creation of shared elements in regional transportation, housing, water, and air quality plans tied to local comprehensive land use and capital investment plans
2. Aligned federal planning and investment resources that mirror the local and regional strategies for achieving sustainable communities
3. Increased participation and decision-making in developing and implementing a long-range vision for the region by populations traditionally marginalized in public planning processes.
4. Reduced social and economic disparities for the low-income and communities of color within the target region.
5. Decrease in per capita Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and transportation-related emissions for the region.
6. Decrease in overall combined housing and transportation costs per household.
7. Increase in the share of residential and commercial construction on underutilized infill development sites that encourage revitalization, while minimizing displacement in neighborhoods with significant disadvantaged populations.
8. Increased proportion of low and very low-income households within a 30-minute transit commute of major employment centers in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants are defined as consortium. The Consortium must include (1) the main city, (2) the largest jurisdiction (3) other jurisdictions so that half of the region's population is included in the application, (4) the MPO and regional planning agency, (5) and a non profit organization, foundation, or educational institution .

The Role of the Consortium

Any of the members may serve as the lead applicant and will be the grant's fiduciary agent. The consortium must submit a cooperative partnership agreement signed by each member with its grant application. The agreement must state that a formal consortium agreement will be executed within 120 days of grant start date. Consortium agreement must state timetables for which things will be executed by each partner. 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.

Cost Sharing or Matching

Matching funds are not required. However, applicants must provide 20 percent of the requested funding amount in **leveraged resources** in the form of cash and/or verified in-kind contributions or a combination of these sources. Successful applicants must have the required amount of leveraged resources (20 percent) at the time of signing the cooperative agreement. In-kind contributions may be in the form of staff time, donated materials, or services.

Category 1: Regional Plans for Sustainable Development — Funds would support the preparation of Regional Plans for Sustainable Development where such plans do not currently exist or where they exist but need to be revised or enhanced. Funds will: support stakeholder-driven visioning and scenario planning exercises that are intended to address and harmonize critical land uses and investment decisions, such as those 15 for the location and the distribution of affordable housing, schools, and employment centers throughout the region; support cost-effective and sustainable transportation and water infrastructure investments; designate lands for conservation and ongoing agricultural use; and proactively consider risks from disasters and climate change. Applicants will be expected to work with HUD to identify a set of locally appropriate performance metrics that are consistent with the performance measures developed by the Sustainability Partnership and the Livability Principles that are listed in this NOFA

Category 2: Detailed Execution Plans and Programs — Funds in this category would support efforts to fine-tune existing regional plans so that they address the full complement of Livability Principles in an integrated fashion, the preparation of more detailed execution plans for an adopted Regional Plan for Sustainable Development and limited predevelopment planning activities for a catalytic project/projects that are a significant aspect of the regional plan, and that would demonstrate the strength of the efforts of the coalition to achieve sustainability through the regional planning process. Applicants will also be expected to outline implementation steps and ongoing governance assignments for the plan.

Requirements for Category 1 & 2 applicants (11 requirements including 8 additional requirements for the RPSD)

1. Establish Coordinated Intergovernmental Planning and Secure Agreements among jurisdictions, regional planning units, state government, public authorities, special districts, and public and private entities to support the goal of the Sustainable Communities Program.
2. Develop a comprehensive Regional Plan for Sustainable Development that address:
 - a. Adopt a housing plan that states that existing and needed affordable housing by tenure/type is identified; assess the need of affordable housing for persons with disabilities (revise last spring's housing document); include the region's PHAs when developing these plans; state how these affordable units' location relate to current and future employment and transportation infrastructure investments; use this analysis to create and implement a plan to better integrate these uses.
 - b. Incorporate equity and fair analysis into a regional plan through the development of a regional analysis of impediments to fair housing choice. The analysis should assess region's impediments to fair housing and provides solutions that offer fair housing choice and link housing resources, transportation and employment access in high opportunity areas. High opportunity areas are those that provide employment, educational, recreational, and service opportunities in the area or that are accessible via public transportation systems.
 - c. Advance regional transportation planning and the development of transportation networks including the expansion of 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. Transportation plans should also address needed investments in street, highway, and transit infrastructure to support and complement those transportation choices with state-of-good-repair priorities.
 - d. Advance water infrastructure planning to ensure that investments in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems support the sustainability of the community and can be sustained by the community over the long term. Activities may include: evaluation of water infrastructure needs and attendant long-term cost burdens that are associated with strategies for investment in other sectors (e.g., transportation and housing); asset management or capital finance planning within water sector utilities or across infrastructure sectors (such as transportation and housing) to coordinate investments in pursuit of sustainability goals, cost efficiency, and livable communities; assessment and implementation of programs and practices to improve water use efficiency or appropriately reuse water, including promotion of practices and devices endorsed by EPA's WaterSense program; and alternatives analyses that evaluate the surface water quality impacts of water, transportation, and housing infrastructure solutions, including environmental requirements

- e. Perform environmental planning that includes environmental review systems to 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 (estuaries, coastal zones, etc.); and measures to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related requirements.
 - f. Plan for economic development activities that stimulate the regional economy and create jobs, including the creation or expansion of existing commercial and industrial centers; the reuse of existing areas such as brownfields; utilization of structures for new economic development ventures; creative reuse of vacant property; the designation of underutilized commercial and industrial space to accommodate arts-related enterprises; the establishments of cultural districts or other opportunities for the creative sector to partner with business, civic, and diverse community leaders; the creation of microenterprises and small business incubators; the inclusion of underrepresented populations in economic sectors; 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.
 - g. Conduct scenario planning that allows the RPSD to project a variety of economic growth possibilities and anticipate responses to each of them.
 - h. Conduct comprehensive climate change impacts assessments to guide regional planning and implementation strategies. Assessments may comprehensively evaluate a range of likely climate change impacts or may focus on an impact area of special concern in the region (e.g.: sea level rise or reduced water availability). Findings from climate impact assessments should be used as a basis for defining adaptation actions to be implemented in appropriate plans and strategies.
3. **Identify immediate and long-term policies** including local land use, zoning, building, and energy codes, land acquisition and assembly, infrastructure investment, tax policy, 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.
 4. **Align infrastructure investment to ensure equitable land use planning** consistent with the RPSD. States, counties, localities, councils of governments, metropolitan/rural planning organizations, and other relevant entities should identify the appropriate programming of capital improvements, financing plans, and other major expenditures for public facilities, utilities, open spaces, recreational areas, transportation infrastructure, energy management infrastructure, waterways, and water infrastructure.
 5. **Ensure public decision-making and meaningful resident participation** throughout the visioning, development, and implementation of the RPSD, including, but not limited to, public hearings, meetings, websites, forums, charrettes, and other communication that will provide all aspects of the policy and development plans and alternative options to residents in sufficient time for them to review, react, and make informed decisions on how proposed plans and policies will impact their daily lives. Activities should prioritize ways to engage communities traditionally marginalized from planning processes, such as low-income

individuals and families, limited English speakers, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

6. **Identify measures to track the progress toward creating sustainable communities** by employing statistical and qualitative analysis of specific indicators developed in partnership with the appropriate federal, state, regional, and local agencies.
7. **Strengthen management and decision-making capacities** of applicable government units, tribal entities, planning organizations, nonprofit institutions, and other partners to execute the aforementioned elements of sustainable regional planning.
8. **Site planning and design of catalytic project or program** included in the RPSD and of clear regional significance associated with implementing the RPSD as specifically allowable, per the terms of successful applications to the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program. These costs could include architectural, engineering and urban design work; environmental impact assessment; legal fees; and site control, including potential acquisition. Applicants must demonstrate that the contribution will leverage the eventual completion of the project. As the priority of this Notice is to create successful Regional Plans for Sustainable Development, HUD reserves the right to require budget adjustments to successful applications that it deems necessary to ensure that the investment to a project of regional significance does not compromise the integrity of the proposed plan. **This activity is only eligible for Category 2 applicants.**
9. **Preparation of administrative and regulatory measures** for the region, metropolitan planning organization, or jurisdictions participating in the RPSD.
10. **Studies and research on the legal authority** to explore 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.
11. **Technical planning studies** concerning local development issues, priorities, or suggested 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.

Rating Factors

1. **Rating Factor 1: Applicant/Relevant Organizational Capacity and Experience (10 points)**
Consortium's capacity to implement the proposed activities in a timely manner. Seven points for organizational capacity and qualifications and three points for key staff's capability and qualifications
2. **Rating Factor 2: Needs/Extent of the Problem (10 points);** a host of data is required for submission and the source of such data is provided in the NOFA.
3. **Rating Factor 3: Soundness of Approach (55 points)**

Category 2 Funding:

(a) Describe the contents of the existing regional plan or vision and how the consortium plans to improve, advance, and/or execute this plan so that it becomes a complete Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

(b) Identify any gaps in the existing Regional Plan for Sustainable Development that need to be addressed and describe how you plan to address them.

(c) Describe how the existing regional plan or vision addresses the six Livability Principles, and, if it does not, describe how the consortium intends to incorporate them into the plan.

(d) Describe how the plan will leverage critical regional economic assets to advance sustainability.

Process to Improve or Further Develop Your Existing Sustainable Regional Plan or Vision (17 points)

(a) Describe how the consortium plans to engage a broad cross section of your local communities, including low-income, minority, and economically disadvantaged communities, and what efforts will be made to ensure that such communities will have an effective role in the planning process, and participate in a sustained manner throughout implementation. Describe plans to engage private sector and business interests that play significant roles in regional economic growth. Discuss previous challenges experienced in getting to the current level of cooperation in regional planning, how participating communities have implemented mechanisms and processes to overcome them, and existing and anticipated political challenges.

(b) Identify any gaps in the existing regional plan or vision that need to be addressed and describe how the consortium plans to address them. These may include subject-matter gaps, such as affordable housing, fair housing, transportation, water infrastructure, climate change impact assessments, etc., or process gaps, such as use of scenario planning methods or broad based and extensive community involvement. What opportunities will support from the grant program make possible?

(c) What have you learned from assessments of existing conditions, plans, and policies in your region? How will the consortium use that information to develop further the existing plan? If such assessments are not complete, please describe what work remains and how it will be accomplished.

(d) Describe the specific steps that will be required to move from plan to action, including: changes to local zoning, building and energy codes, land use, financing, and development policies; work with MPOs and state agencies to realign transportation investments; solidifying regional agreements for water, waste, and natural resource management; launching employment initiatives that support regional workforce needs and programs targeting hard-to reach populations that create a better jobs/housing balance; identifying capital improvement costs and financing strategies for specific area, transit corridor, water/wastewater service, or regional affordable housing plans; and/or conducting negotiations that formalize multijurisdictional agreements to implement elements of a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Be certain to identify challenges that are distinctive or defining in your region.

4. Governance and Management (15 points)

(a) Describe the rationale for the selection of the partners applying for the Program, the commitment of each partner, and the strategy for incorporating any additional potential partners who may not currently be part of the consortium.

(b) Describe the role each consortium member will play in executing your regional plan implementation process and the adjustments that need to be made to the existing structure and why these changes are necessary.

(c) Detail the formal structure of the consortium, including its decision-making mechanisms and specific strategies to ensure that the perspectives of diverse and traditionally underrepresented populations directly influence the development and implementation of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. HUD will reserve five of the rating points for Governance and Management for this item. (5 points)

(d) Describe the data management plan, including how information will be collected and shared amongst participating agencies to ensure that decisions are well-informed and communicated across jurisdictions.

(e) Explain how you will ensure the implementation of the RPSD, including, if applicable, the identification of existing and future funding commitments.

5. Project Implementation Schedule (5 points)

(a) Describe your implementation schedule, including regular milestones necessary to achieve the critical actions you will take, start and end dates for each activity, and your expected metrics and results.

(b) Describe how the consortium will link elements of the existing Regional Plan for Sustainable Development to specific outcomes to be achieved in the next 18 to 36 months that resolve challenges identified in Factor 2 of this NOFA.