

Smart Growth Implementation Assistance: 2010 Request for Letters of Interest (RFLI)

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE: Approximately \$70,000 per recipient in contractor support

COMMUNITIES SELECTED THIS YEAR: 3 to 4

SMART GROWTH AND EPA

The Development, Community, and Environment Division (DCED), known as the Smart Growth Program, in EPA's Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation is seeking letters of interest from states, regions, and communities that want to develop in ways that reflect the principles of smart growth and meet environmental and other goals. EPA will provide technical assistance to successful applicants as described below. Eligible entities are tribal, local, regional, and state governments, and nonprofit organizations that have a demonstrated partnership with a governmental entity.

Selected applicants will receive assistance in the form of a multi-day visit by a team of experts organized by EPA and other national partners to work with local leaders. Staff from EPA, HUD, and DOT will participate in these site visits. EPA will provide this assistance through an Agency contract vehicle, **not a grant**. Team members will be experts in disciplines to be determined by the community's unique needs. The contractor team will likely engage with the applicant to study the context and the specific project and meet with elected officials, business leaders, citizen organizations, and other stakeholder groups. Upon completion, the applicant will receive a final report developed by EPA and its consultant team featuring a compilation of the resources developed throughout the visit, including options for follow-on action.

Development practices that reflect the principles of smart growth and support national environmental and public health goals include: minimizing water quality impacts from development; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution through more compact development and better transportation options; promoting equitable development; and encouraging clean-up and sustainable redevelopment of brownfields. These practices are described by the ten Smart Growth Principles:

1. Mix land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

For more information on smart growth, please visit EPA's Smart Growth web site at: www.epa.gov/smartgrowth.

SMART GROWTH AND THE EPA-HUD-DOT INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Over the past year, EPA has been working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in the Partnership for Sustainable

Communities. This partnership will help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities nationwide. Through a set of guiding Livability Principles and a Partnership agreement that will guide the agencies' efforts, this Partnership will coordinate federal housing, transportation, and other infrastructure investments to protect the environment, promote equitable development, and help to address the challenges of climate change.

The six Livability Principles are:

1. Provide more transportation choices.
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.
3. Enhance economic competitiveness.
4. Support existing communities.
5. Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.
6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

For more information about the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, please visit: www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/partnership.

One way HUD, EPA and DOT are working together is through the Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Program. This program provides assistance from national experts to help communities explore barriers to smart growth implementation and other issues. Over the last five years, this program has worked with a diverse array of communities from across the country focusing on issues such as stormwater management, code revision, transit-oriented development, affordable housing, infill development, corridor planning, green building, and climate change. In 2009, EPA started to involve HUD and DOT in the management and assistance provided to the selected communities. In addition to helping communities directly, the SGIA program helps EPA learn more about how communities around the country strive to create places that provide transportation and housing choices while protecting environmental resources.

For more information about the Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program, including reports from previous projects, see www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia_communities.htm.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITY

Communities and states around the country are interested in fostering economic growth, protecting their environmental resources, enhancing public health, extending the benefits of community redevelopment to all citizens equitably, and planning for development, but they may lack the tools, resources, or information to achieve these goals. Particularly given the current economic climate, communities are often forced to make difficult decisions about how and where to invest public resources to accommodate growth, stimulate their local economy, and respond to changing environmental challenges. Communities are often expected to use scarce resources to demonstrate impact in one or more of these areas simultaneously.

In response to these needs, EPA, with the assistance of HUD and DOT, is offering direct technical assistance from national experts to communities, tribes, regions, and states that want to incorporate smart growth techniques in their development. EPA is also interested in identifying and documenting innovative solutions to complex problems faced by communities as they seek to incorporate smart growth practices. The findings from SGIA efforts inform EPA's own policy practice. As such, they serve as evidence of cutting-edge challenges, examples of leadership in smart growth, and solutions that can be disseminated and replicated across the country.

Topics of interest for this year's solicitation are:

- Climate Change:
 - Role of land use or development patterns greenhouse gas reduction efforts
 - Planning for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
- Equitable Development: Projects that address barriers to smart growth access and choice
- Financing and Planning Infrastructure Investments (such as coordinated planning to fund streets, sewer/water, telecommunications)
- Hazard Mitigation Plans:
 - Keeping future growth out of flood prone areas
 - Coordination of local, regional, state resources
- Removing local barriers to implementing LEED-ND projects
- Suburban Retrofit:
 - Residential strategies to accommodate more housing choice and density
 - Redeveloping outdated commercial with mixed use development
 - Improving walkability and connectivity
- Transportation Solutions for:
 - Rural communities
 - Communities with transit, but not rail

Proposals are not limited to requests for technical assistance in only these thematic areas; other areas of assistance are welcome and encouraged, provided they demonstrate cutting-edge challenges and the possibility for replicable solutions.

Furthermore, EPA and its partners are particularly interested in awarding one project to a **City in Transition** (as evidenced by decline in employment, decline in population, significant increase in poverty, and/or severe economic change).

EPA is soliciting letters of interest from communities, tribes, regions, and state governments that want assistance with smart growth implementation. The type of work itself may incorporate policy analysis and review, planning and visioning processes, scorecard/ranking criteria development and assessment, and/or other elements pertinent to the role of the applicant. The type of work, however, should enable the community to better implement smart growth development practices.

PREPARING THE LETTER OF INTEREST

EPA will evaluate letters of interest based on the criteria listed below. These letters should be detailed and clearly identify the challenge the applicant is facing and the specific activities that would be most helpful from the EPA-led team. Letters should be no more than two pages in a word processing document format with one inch margins, in no less than 10-point font. Submissions are to be kept to two pages – no supplemental materials or information will be read or considered. This letter will serve as an initial screen of projects. Approximately 15 percent of applicants will be asked to submit full applications, which will provide additional information to reviewers. This process will enable communities to be judicious with their time and help EPA decide from which projects to solicit additional information.

The letters need to include the following:

1. **Project Contact.** List name, title, phone, email, and address of the person who will be the main project contact. This person will be responsible for working with EPA staff to answer questions and provide additional information as the application process progresses. This person should have a comprehensive understanding of the content and work of the assistance.
2. **Description of the Smart Growth Challenge.** (3 to 4 paragraphs) As this program focuses on smart growth implementation, submitters need to have a well-developed understanding of smart growth and its implementation. Applicants need to demonstrate their understanding of smart growth through their description of their needs. In particular, we would like to know why this challenge exists, how it has been addressed in the past (if at all), and what you hope to accomplish by addressing this challenge. Submitters do not need to have the answers – that is the purpose of the assistance – but you must concisely describe the challenge and provide some insight as to why the EPA team should pursue this topic. Note: on page 3, we list topics of specific interest to EPA and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Challenges are not limited to this list, but these will give you a good idea of what type of issues we are particularly interested in exploring.
3. **Political Support and Implementation.** (1 paragraph) A key element of the success of this program is local support. Applicants need to identify persons and/or organizations that support the project and will work toward its implementation. For instance, applicants need to address whether this project is a priority to the mayor or elected officials. To this end, who is championing this work and who will find the resources to ensure that it is part of efforts to implement smart growth? Also, applicants need to describe their power or influence over the implementation of the solutions that will be generated.
4. **Role of EPA-led Sustainable Communities Partnership Team.** (2 paragraphs) The project scope can be refined once the project begins. However, we still require a brief, targeted description of the expected role of the EPA-led team. For instance, what will the national experts do -- will they hold a workshop, conduct research, analyze data, etc.? How will the team's involvement help resolve the challenge? Clearly demonstrating your ideas here will provide our team with a sense of how you see the project progressing. This component is critical because it demonstrates how an applicant envisions the contribution of EPA and its team. When the role of team is described completely, there is a better chance that we will find the project idea compelling and worth investment.
5. **Replicability of the Project.** (1 to 2 paragraphs) The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program has a dual purpose. First, it aims to help the individual community solve a challenge or problem. Second, it helps EPA and our federal partners better understand a particular smart growth issue. Describe how the anticipated results of the project can inform EPA and its federal partners, as well as how the results could be replicated in other communities. Understandably, the expected results may not be known, but successful projects will have some sense of how this investment will benefit the submitter and other communities.

Letters of interest will be evaluated based on compliance with these instructions. A small group of applicants will be asked to submit a more formal and detailed application. Applicants will be asked to address a series of criteria regarding the project challenge, scope and potential applicability, among other elements. From that group, semifinalists will be designated. EPA and its federal partners will conduct conference calls with the semifinalists. These calls will be used to further evaluate how well the applicant meets the criteria. EPA will make final selections following the completion of the conference calls by late summer 2010.

Letters of interest must be submitted via email to Kevin Nelson <nelson.kevin@epa.gov> no later than **Friday, April 9, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.** Eastern Standard Time. If you have questions about this solicitation, please contact Kevin Nelson via email or at 202-566-2835.