

Smart Growth Implementation Assistance

2008 Request for Applications (RFA)

SMART GROWTH AND THE U.S. EPA

The Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED) in U.S. EPA's Office of Policy Economics and Innovation is seeking applications from states, regions, and communities that want to develop in ways that 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. Development practices that reflect the principles of smart growth support national environmental and public health goals by protecting sensitive watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices, lowering greenhouse gas emissions through more compact development patterns, and encouraging clean-up and sustainable redevelopment of brownfields. Smart growth is often characterized by a common set of principles:

- mix land uses;
- take advantage of compact building design;
- create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
- create walkable neighborhoods;
- foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas;
- strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
- provide a variety of transportation choices;
- make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and
- encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

For more information on smart growth, please visit the DCED web site at:

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth.

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. In response to this demand, EPA is offering direct technical assistance from national experts to communities and states that want to incorporate smart growth techniques in their development. This assistance from EPA is intended to help applicants overcome roadblocks by providing evaluation tools and expert analysis.

EPA is soliciting applications from communities, regions, and state governments that want assistance with either policy analysis or public participatory processes. Examples of project ideas include, but are not limited to:

- crafting policies that allow or encourage specific smart growth techniques (e.g., transit-oriented development; infill; redeveloping vacant properties, brownfields, abandoned gas stations, etc.);
- reviewing state department of transportation investments to support smart growth;
- using smart growth to balance the goals of economic development and cultural development through heritage preservation;
- analyzing plans, guidelines, criteria, or procedures for school investments;
- retrofitting a commercial corridor;
- coordinating communities' smart growth design with active aging programs;
- reviewing state, regional, or local investments and policies to support climate change goals and more compact development;
- evaluating regional equity through access to healthy food and public transportation or capacity building in underserved communities;
- analyzing a pending update to zoning codes;
- using smart growth to address BRAC-related challenges, including growing populations, due to military realignment or closing of a local military facility;
- meeting a statutory deadline on stormwater ordinances;
- crafting a vision for reclaiming derelict property with the assistance of community development corporations and youth-based housing rehabilitation programs; or
- reviewing subdivision regulations to support complete street networks and compact development.

EPA is particularly interested in projects that seek to resolve challenges associated with increasing the supply, quality, or accessibility of affordable (or workforce) housing in a smart growth development context. While expanding housing choice is a core principle of smart growth, the regulatory framework often inhibits the private market from producing a range of housing types that would satisfy the needs of all income levels. Some communities have had success addressing affordability challenges using smart growth approaches, thereby better understanding the environmental, transportation, and fiscal impacts – at the household and community levels – of different housing options. Projects that can use this assistance to develop innovative, practical, and replicable solutions to these challenges will merit careful consideration under criteria #4 (see below) from reviewers this year.

Selected communities or states will receive assistance in the form of a multi-day visit from a team of experts organized by EPA and other national partners to work with local leaders. EPA will provide this assistance through an Agency contract vehicle, not a grant. Team members will be nationally known experts in disciplines to be determined by the community's unique needs. Team visits consist of meetings with state or local staff to study the context and specific project and discussions with elected officials, business leaders, citizen organizations, and representatives of many different sectors. On the last day, the team presents preliminary findings to the applicant and its leadership. After the visit, the team works with the applicant to deliver a final report.

EPA plans to assist three to five communities in 2008. EPA anticipates announcing the selected communities in fall of 2008 and working with the communities over a period of twelve months. The lessons learned from these projects will be used to help other communities with similar challenges.

EPA must receive applications by 5:00PM EST, Thursday, May 8th, 2008.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

EPA will evaluate applications based on the criteria listed below. Project descriptions should be detailed and clearly identify the challenge the community, region, or state agency is facing and the specific activities that would be most helpful from the EPA-led team. The criteria listed below will be used to do a preliminary review of the applications. Following this initial review, EPA will conduct conference calls with finalists. Conference calls will include the applicant and major partners identified in the application. These calls will be used to further evaluate the extent to which the applicant is successful in meeting the criteria. EPA will make final selections following the completion of the conference calls.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. The applicant must be (1) a tribal, state, local, or regional government; or (2) an incorporated nonprofit organization incorporated or domiciled in the United States or an academic institution that has a demonstrated partnership with a governmental agency. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the U.S.

2. Technical assistance will be provided to integrate the principles of smart growth into state or local planning processes to promote infill development. The assistance must relate to policy analysis or public participatory processes that will improve the overall climate for brownfields redevelopment as well as revitalization of other infill sites.

DCED will not consider applications that have a principal purpose of providing training, research, and technical assistance to individuals and organizations to facilitate the inventory of brownfield sites, site assessments, remediation of brownfield sites, site preparation, or community involvement associated with the clean-up, assessment, or inventory of brownfield properties. EPA funds these types of projects only under the Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment's "Brownfields Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants and Cooperative Agreement Program."

We will consider applications for policy analysis or public participatory processes (as illustrated by the bulleted list above) associated with the smart growth redevelopment of infill generally in a city, county, state, or on tribal lands that includes brownfields sites as well as other types of sites. However, community-involvement activities associated with the clean-up, assessment, or inventory of individual brownfield sites are not eligible for funding under this RFA.

3. The community, region, or state must have a demonstrated understanding of and commitment to the principles of smart growth. Applicants should describe actions that the community, region or state has taken to address the location and design of development, regardless of whether they have been successful. EPA is looking for applicants that have already learned about the principles of smart growth and now want implementation assistance.

4. The community, region, or state must clearly be facing a development-related challenge, whether it involves growth pressures, affordable housing needs, attracting more development, or planning for the future, and must have identified opportunities for changing the way it handles growth. The application should include a discussion of growth conditions in the area of interest, as well as assets and challenges to implementing smart growth practices. The application should also specify the type of assistance (policy analysis or public participatory processes) being requested and how it will be applied.

5. The application must have a specific, clearly defined project, and there must be a clear role for a team to assist with policy analysis or public participation. Applicants must describe the project; discuss how it relates to local, regional, or state growth; describe partnerships in place to help make the project succeed; and explain how its success would affect the applicant's environmental, social, and economic health. EPA will work with each selected applicant to develop a detailed statement of work to ensure that the contract support maximizes the expert assistance available to the community, region, or state.

6. The applicant must be able to demonstrate how it anticipates using the results from the EPA-led team to implement changes at the local, regional, or state level. The applicant should also describe the authority that it has to implement any changes and the steps necessary to implement design or policy options developed through the project.

7. The applicant must form a team to work with the EPA-led expert team and to follow up on the technical assistance. This team should include representatives from relevant sectors, including government, business, public interest groups, civic associations, and individual citizens. The team will be responsible for working with the EPA-team pre- and post-site visit and working with the applicant to ensure all appropriate stakeholders are represented in the assistance.

As a proponent of *collaborative environmental problem solving*, EPA supports meaningful public involvement, especially among underserved populations or non-traditional stakeholders. Applicants are encouraged to reach beyond political and professional stakeholders and target faith-based groups, parents, senior citizens, schools, retirement centers, and community service organizations when forming their team.

Applicants should submit letters of support and participation from the principal partners on the team, signed by an individual who can commit the organization to the project. The EPA-led team will be on site for only a few days. The applicant and its partners must carry out the bulk of the work and must have the dedication and vision to succeed. Applicants must also specify the staff who will work on this project before and during the team visit and during the follow-up.

8. Elected officials – mayors, county commissioners, city council members, state agency directors, etc. – must support this project and be committed to its success. The response to this request for applications will require a letter of support from the primary elected official in the community, as well as a list of other elected officials who support it. If a state agency is applying, this letter should be from the agency head or elected official who will have responsibility for carrying out the project.

9. Although this assistance will be free to the applicant, communities, regions, and states that show commitment through partnerships, such as local government staff time, support from local businesses, and other local resources, will have priority in the selection process. Matching funds from the applicant will allow greater use of the expert team for the selected project. Applicants should include a list of supporters and describe any previous collaborations on growth and development issues, if applicable. Applicants should also mention any potential matching funds and other technical assistance programs or grants for which they may be applying.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

To be considered complete and eligible for review, all applications must include a summary page, cover letter, project description, letter of support from the community's main elected official or agency decision official, and documentation of partner participation. All parts of the application must be submitted together. The following format is required:

Summary page (no longer than one page)

The summary page should include the project title, contact information for the project manager, type of assistance requested (policy analysis or public participation processes), and an abstract of the project. If a nonprofit organization or academic institution is submitting the application, then the name and contact information for the governmental partner must also be provided.

Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter that accompanies your application must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your government, agency, or organization to the project and should be written on your official letterhead.

Project description (no longer than 5 page sides)

The request for assistance must describe the project clearly and specifically. The narrative must provide a concise overview of the project, including how it ties into larger issues of local or regional growth and how EPA assistance will support the project. The description must detail support for action and resources (e.g., staff time, support from business, cost-sharing, etc.) that the applicant's team will bring to the project. The narrative must also address how the application meets each of the criteria and what environmental results the applicant expects. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be clearly defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 5-page-side limit. Project descriptions must use no smaller than 10-point type and should have page margins all around of at least one inch.

Letter of support from elected official (not included in page limit)

Applicants must include a letter of support from the primary elected official in the community (e.g., mayor, county commission chair). If the applicant is a state government agency, the letter should be from the head of the agency or an elected official. Also include a list of other stakeholders who support the project; letters from these people are not required. Please include these materials with the application.

Documentation of partner participation (not included in page limit)

Applicants should include letters of support from the principal partners in the local team that will be assisting the EPA-led team and directing follow-up activities. Please include these letters with the application. Principal partners will be expected to participate in a conference call for the finalists.

EPA must receive applications by 5:00PM EST, Thursday, May 8, 2008. No late applications will be accepted. Applicants must submit one original and four copies of their full application. All applications must be submitted in accordance with the requirements described above. No fax submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.

If you are sending your application via hand delivery (e.g., UPS, Federal Express, courier, or some other means) send it to:

Deloris Wingo-Huntley
Development, Community and Environment Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1301 Constitution Ave. NW
EPA West Building, Room 1408
Washington, DC 20004
202-566-2862

If you are mailing your application, send it to:

Deloris Wingo-Huntley
Development, Community and Environment Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Mail Code 1807T
Washington, DC 20460

Please note that there may be substantial delays in conventional mail service to EPA due to heightened security screening.

If you have questions about this solicitation, please contact:

Brett VanAkkeren
vanakkeren.brett@epa.gov
202-566-2865

or

Kevin Nelson
nelson.kevin@epa.gov
202-566-2835