



## **FAQ – Livability Solutions Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program**

**UPDATED 11-6-14**

### **If a community is selected for technical assistance, how do you determine the team that will prepare for and facilitate the workshop?**

If your community is selected for technical assistance, the Livability Solutions Selection Committee team that reviews your application will match you with an appropriate partner, given the tool(s) you have selected and the specifics of your proposed project/tool application. We will contact you first in February to let you know that you have been selected for technical assistance and the Livability Solutions partner that would provide that assistance. In 2015, we would then schedule at least two calls with you to determine the specifics of your workshop and technical assistance, which would occur with your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner and staff at Project for Public Spaces who are administering this program overall.

### **How can my community put together a successful application?**

There are several factors that can make an application stand out. In addition to thoughtfully addressing the five selection criteria outlined in the application process, successful candidates tend to be ones that have:

- *Identified a very specific opportunity or need that can be addressed through the available tools and the workshop format (1-2 days on site).* The Building Blocks Program is designed to help communities make progress quickly within 'quick hit' technical assistance. Successful applicants will have a targeted scope of work and a specific opportunity to realize change, such as an upcoming zoning plan overhaul or a street redesign.
- *Assembled the right partners for the project.* Successful applicants will already have a coalition of allies who are poised for action. Their key decisionmaker(s) relevant to the project should be engaged and willing to attend the workshops, whether that is a transportation agency, the mayor's office, or the local council member. Finally, having a broad coalition that represents the local neighborhood is important for the success of the project.
- *Targeted their project to communities most in need of assistance.* This year, we are placing an even stronger emphasis in prioritizing applications from neighborhoods with social, economic, and environmental disadvantages, in order to help those communities most in need of assistance. It is our goal that two-thirds of selected applicants will represent low resource, disadvantaged communities.

**What is the local community/applicant responsible for if selected as a technical assistance recipient?**

If selected for technical assistance, the local community/applicant is responsible for the following:

- Having one main point of contact who will coordinate local partners and work directly with your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner and staff at Project for Public Spaces who are administering this program overall.
- Organizing relevant local staff and partners to participate in at least two calls in March-April 2015 to plan your workshop and technical assistance plan.
- Reviewing, editing (if applicable) and signing a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines roles and responsibilities for each party involved in the technical assistance program, with your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner and Project for Public Spaces.
- Organizing the logistics of the workshop site/location, outreach to invite partners/stakeholders/the public to attend, and printing materials. Livability Solutions will provide a pre-workshop checklist and meeting materials in order to help facilitate this process.
- Providing feedback on the draft technical assistance recommendations memo and performance metrics that your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner will provide after your workshop. The memo will include a summary of relevant findings from the workshop/site visit, recommendations to advance your local goals, a mutually agreed-upon short term action plan and performance metrics to help you track your progress on the project.
- Participating in two follow up calls following the workshop (at 2 months and 9-12 months following the workshop) and providing brief written feedback about your experience 9-12 months after your technical assistance workshop is delivered. Finally each community will also be asked to provide a written summary of the project 6 months after the project available for use on Livability Solutions' website, using the format of the existing project profiles at: <http://www.pps.org/livability-solutions/c/projects/>

**Are technical assistance providers permitted to conduct follow up or future work in the community?**

Yes. In terms of follow up assistance covered as a part of the EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program, your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner will deliver a draft and then final version of a technical assistance recommendations memo and performance metrics to help track your progress after your workshop. You will also have one follow up call within two months of your workshop to discuss the technical memo and immediate next steps your community plans to take on your project, and a check in call 9-12 months after your workshop in order to check in on your progress and discuss any challenges. Separate from this work, you can invite your Livability Solutions technical assistance partner to conduct other or complementary work in your community, but that would occur outside of this EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program.

**Is there a requirement for matching funds in order to apply for this technical assistance?**

No, there is no requirement for matching funds. Among the factors that we consider in selecting communities for technical assistance is the opportunity for leveraging, which we define in the application as: 'The existence of additional commitment, funding, and/or in-kind support to the proposed project or initiative from a public or private sector partner or a

local foundation, which can add value to the EPA-funded assistance by supporting follow-up plans or implementation, will be considered a plus.'

**Can communities apply for both this opportunity and the other technical assistance that is available through the EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities?**

Yes, the EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities has several other technical assistance opportunities, and communities are welcome to apply for multiple programs. However, Livability Solutions will work with EPA to ensure that the same communities are not receiving duplicative awards of technical assistance for the same year. You can learn more about EPA's other technical assistance opportunities at the [Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities website](#).

**Can I apply if I am not a local government agency or official?**

Yes, any local, regional, state or tribal government, or agency, or subdivision thereof, or a community-based organization may apply. However, if the applicant agency/organization is not a local or tribal government, then it must indicate, through a signed letter from a local elected official or head of a local government agency, how the local government will be substantively involved.

**What does it mean for our local government to be 'substantively involved'?**

The intention of this technical assistance is to work directly with local and/or tribal governments to increase their capacity to successfully implement smart growth and sustainable communities approaches that protect the environment, improve public health, facilitate job creation and economic opportunity, and improve overall quality of life. We recognize the importance of many players in achieving livability, smart growth and sustainability at the local level, but commitment from local government is critical. Local elected officials or heads of agencies must express their support for the technical assistance, commit staff and resources to the workshops, attend the workshops themselves, and engage in the implementation of the results.

**Can I submit my signed letter after my application is submitted?**

No. Letters of commitment must be submitted with the application by the application deadline. If your application is received before the deadline without the attached letter, you will receive an email notification letting you know that you will need to submit the completed application.

**Is there a budget for each award of technical assistance?**

There is an overall budget for the technical assistance program, but each award of assistance will vary slightly depending on the community's need and the providers who best fit the assistance they have requested. We will work with each selected community to develop a plan for assistance, which will be articulated in a signed Memorandum of Agreement between the awarded community and Livability Solutions' partners. Each program will consist of one- to two-day workshops led by Livability Solutions partners that will utilize and train participants in one or more tools from the Livability Solutions Toolkit. There will be a short memo / technical report follow-up from Livability Solutions after these workshops, and recipients will be asked to follow-up at two, six, and 9-12 months to report on their progress toward goals set during the workshops.

**Can a university or a non-profit organization apply for assistance?**

This assistance is primarily meant to serve local governments, however, a university, college, or non-profit organization may apply for this program if it can demonstrate that: 1)

a local government is substantively involved in the project (through a signed letter from a local elected official or head of a local government agency that indicates how the local government will be substantively involved); 2) that the technical assistance provided will help the community reach a particular livability or sustainability goal; and 3) that the applicant has the capability, with its partners, to implement agreed-upon recommendations that result from the technical assistance.

**Are U.S. territories eligible for this assistance?**

Yes, 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.

**To whom should we address our letter(s) of commitment?**

Letters of commitment can be addressed to:

*Kate Rube*

*Project Manager*

*Project for Public Spaces*

*419 Lafayette Street, 7th Floor*

*New York, NY 10003*

*E-mail: [krube@pps.org](mailto:krube@pps.org)*

All letters must be on letterhead and signed by an individual authorized to commit the agency or organization in question. Letters should be submitted as pdfs or jpegs.

**What should I do if I have trouble with or cannot complete the online application?**

If you have any difficulty with the online application form, please contact us at [livabilitysolutions@pps.org](mailto:livabilitysolutions@pps.org) or you may call Kate Rube at 212.620.5660×326, to work out an alternative application submission process.