Lessons Learned from HUD’s 2010 Regional Planning Grant Program

Tim Torma
U.S. EPA, Office of Sustainable Communities
torma.tim@epa.gov
The Partnership’s Mission

To help American families in all communities — rural, suburban and urban — gain better access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs.
The Partnership’s 6 Livability Principles

1. Provide more transportation choices
2. Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices
3. Improve economic competitiveness of neighborhoods by giving people reliable access to employment centers, educational opportunities, and other basic services.
4. Target federal funding toward existing communities – through transit-oriented development and place-based policies.
5. Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the effectiveness of existing programs.
6. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities, whether rural, suburban or urban.
HUD’s 2010 Regional Planning Grant Program

- HUD’s Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities began two planning grant programs in FY2010.
  - Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program
  - Community Challenge Grant Program.

- $98 million was allocated to FY2010 Regional Grant Competition.
Results

• 45 regions received grants
• 10 of the 25 largest metropolitan areas are participating
• 80 million U.S. residents in jurisdictions that were awarded Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants
• 13 regions from small communities and rural places
• 6 consortia led by nonprofit organization
• 3 regions driven by tribal leadership
• $120 million in co-investment from partners leverages federal investment
• 29 regions achieved Preferred Sustainability Status
HUD’s 2011 Regional Planning Grant Program

• Advance Notice of Requirements for the FY2011 program is now available.

• Provides a detailed review of the program requirements that will be expected from the official NOFA.

• HUD will invest $67 million in these grants in FY2011.
Tips for Writing a Strong Application

1. Know the NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability). Read it. Respond directly to it. This was easily the top piece of advice from reviewers. Hands down.

2. Clearly articulate the need. (Rating Factor # 2). Do so in a way that tells a story but back it up with data.

3. Describe a clear pathway to addressing the story in the need statement (Rating Factor #3, Multiple Rating Factors)

4. Show that you have a clear and realistic plan to measure progress (Rating Factor # 5)
Tips for Writing a Strong Application

5. Showed capacity to do what’s desired or a clear plan to get there even if current capacity is lower. (Rating Factor #3, Others)

6. The right consortium. (Rating Factor #1, #4)
   - Can this group get it done?
   - Why is the lead applicant the lead applicant?
   - How diverse is the coalition?
   - How committed are the members? How is that demonstrated?

7. Ensure that equity and involvement of underserved/underrepresented populations and areas of the region will be sustained throughout the process. (Rating Factor #1.c.)
Tips for Writing a Strong Application

8. Avoid a Chinese menu of cool sounding projects without linking them to the statement of need and the elements of the RFP.
   - One reviewer: “Lots of great stuff here, but it is not tied together, does not tell a story, and it’s not clear to me how these items cumulatively address the ranking factors”

9. Avoid typos and obvious “cut & paste”
Other Information

- HUD has worked to improve the application process.
  - Last year 60 applications (some good) did not meet threshold requirements.
  - HUD has added a pre-application process which allows you to state your threshold requirements while you continue to work on app.
- Do not wait for feedback on preapplication to start work on the application.
- Based on your preapplication, HUD is allowed to tell you what’s wrong, but not how to fix it.
- Exact date of NOFA publication not yet certain.
For More Information

About the Partnership:  
http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/

About the HUD grants:  
www.hud.gov/sustainability

About EPA’s work in this area:  
www.epa.gov/smartgrowth

About DOT’s work in this area:  
www.dot.gov/livability