What is it?
The Sustainable Communities Learning Network connects a community of people working to develop more sustainable, prosperous and equitable communities and regions. When your organization received technical assistance or a grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities through EPA or HUD, it became eligible to participate in the Network and receive other capacity building services. The Network will provide a way to discuss issues, share information and get connected with capacity building experts and other grant and TA recipients.

How does it work?
The Learning Network will consist of a suite of virtual and in-person peer-learning and networking services. The virtual component will be centered on a website, www.SCLearningNetwork.org, to launch in late February and provide an array of useful, targeted features, including:

- Calendar of events, consolidating all in-person and virtual offerings;
- Resource library, a one-stop shop for best practices and successes, templates, how-to guides, promising practices, workshop archives, and other tools;
- Professional networking platform, limited to your peers and the Capacity Building Intermediary (CBI) Resource Teams with opportunities to interact with others based on issue area, grant type, location and more; and
- CBI Resource Team leads active on the Network to provide direct assistance and lead discussions on key topics.

In the meantime, you will receive weekly Learning Network Update emails highlighting upcoming online and in-person events where you will be able to meet your peers and get access to training and other resources from the CBI Resource Teams.

In addition to SCLearningNetwork.org, the Learning Network will provide several other ways for you to get assistance.

- Webinars on critical challenges and opportunities;
- Virtual learning/discussion groups organized around specific challenge areas, such as financing, coalition-building and community engagement;
- Experts on call to answer your questions on a range of topics, including communications and media support; and
- Monthly updates of project milestones and highlights from around the country.
The in-person peer-learning and networking services will consist of a series of four to six Sustainable Communities Leadership Academies – intensive, two- to three-day workshops, in which multi-disciplinary teams of practitioners from partner communities will learn from each other and expert guests by directly sharing experiences and ideas. These workshops will focus on high-priority challenges such as integrating and collaborating across sectors and jurisdictions, engaging the community, designing inclusive processes and achieving equitable outcomes, and financing sustainable development strategies and initiatives. The first of these, targeted at small and rural communities, will occur in early March, and the application deadline has passed. We expect to deliver two additional Leadership Academies in 2012 – targeted for April and June – with another two or three in 2013. Applications will be available to targeted communities starting in February. All workshops will be webcast and archived on SCLearningNetwork.org.

Who is involved?
The Institute for Sustainable Communities and Smart Growth America are working together to create the Learning Network along with other CBI Resource Teams and experts from HUD and EPA.

When can I start using it?
The Sustainable Communities Learning Network website will be launched in the next few weeks. In the meantime, the first Learning Network Update email will be sent this week to the primary point-of-contact for each community. Keep an eye out for that, and for more information and an invitation in your inbox.

We look forward to working with you!