



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Smart Growth America's

State Legislator Champions Institute

Overview and Application Information

Overview

Summary

The State Legislator Champions Institute is a technical assistance and peer learning program to help motivated state legislators develop knowledge and skills to develop transportation policies, plans and funding mechanisms that support public health, climate, and equity goals.

State transportation policies and practices play a significant role in whether residents in urban, suburban, and rural communities alike have choices about how they reach daily necessities: are they able to choose to safely take those trips by lower-cost, low-emissions modes of travel that increase physical activity like walking or traveling with mobility-assistive devices, biking, and taking transit, or are they required to travel by car? State transportation policies and practices can also pose major barriers to health, climate, and equity goals, and these practices are sometimes so deeply embedded that they are difficult to identify and address. With the influx of funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, states have a crucial window of opportunity to put policies in place now with lasting positive impact.

The State Legislator Champions Institute will provide an opportunity for a cohort of state elected officials from around the US to understand and develop policies and strategies that benefit everyone who uses our transportation system, discuss challenges in a group of like-minded peers, and ultimately be national leaders in implementing innovative state policy. Participants will attend a series of virtual workshop sessions to grow their expertise and experience in promoting strategies to create safe transportation systems for everyone in their state; develop policies that prioritize health, equity, and climate in transportation; collaborate with other state legislators across the country to learn best practices; and improve framing and communications.

This program builds on the model and curriculum of an existing Local Champions Institute program that Smart Growth America has successfully conducted for three years [convening cohorts of local elected officials](#) from across the country.

Program Structure

State leaders who are selected for the Champions Institute will have the opportunity to learn from a broad array of national experts and former local and state elected officials in areas like Complete Streets, roadway safety, public transit policy and funding, measuring

access to jobs and services, system preservation, and more. Participants will also learn about model legislative initiatives from across the country, as they grapple with different strategies in a collaborative and supportive peer-learning environment.

Participants will attend seven interactive virtual learning sessions for the **first half of the program** that expand their understanding of the relationship between roadway safety, equity, health and transportation and train them on the fundamental steps to take to achieve activity-friendly transportation systems in their state. These trainings will focus on their oversight, legislating, and funding responsibilities, as well as opportunities to be an organizer whilst working in the state legislature. During the **second half of the program**, each Champion will develop and begin to lead their own legislative or policy initiative or strategy, whether developing a piece of legislation, building support for policy change, or coalition-building around a key issue. Champions do not need to apply to the program with a specific initiative in mind but are encouraged to bring an array of options to the table.

Champion Eligibility

Any current state legislator may apply to become a participant within the State Legislator Champions Institute.

Program Timeline

Activity	Date
SGA informational webinar: Champions Institute 2022 and application process	Thurs, Dec 1, 2022
Applications due	Thurs, Dec 22, 2022
SGA notifies selected participants	Fri, Jan 27, 2023
Champions Institute Launch	March 2023
Virtual workshop session #1	Thurs, March 16, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #2	Thurs, March 23, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #3	Thurs, March 30, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #4	Thurs, April 6, 2023

	4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #5	Thurs, April 13, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #6	Thurs, April 20, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Virtual workshop session #7	Thurs, April 27, 2023 4pm-6pm ET
Champions work on their initiatives (SGA will conduct office hours and mid-point check-ins)	May - July 2023
Champions report on progress with their initiatives	July 2023

Selection process and criteria

Applications for the Champions Institute will be evaluated based on criteria established by SGA in consultation with the CDC’s DNPAO.

- SGA staff will review each application for completeness. Only complete applications shall advance to the next step.
- A committee will review each application per the criteria listed below.
- SGA will determine which applications best meet the selection criteria and offer a formal invitation to participate to those individuals.
- Successful applicants will be notified by January 27, 2023

The primary selection criteria are:

- **Interest in smart growth, activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations, and transportation policies that support public health, climate, and equity goals. (25% of score)** – While State Legislator Champions Institute participants do not need to be transportation policy experts, applications should demonstrate an interest in improving safety and access for road users who are on foot, bicycles, or other mobility devices, increasing access to physical activity, expanding transit service, reducing emissions from transportation, or otherwise making local communities in their state more healthy, prosperous, and resilient. Evidence of this interest can include past legislative initiatives or other past work related to these goals. Applicants should also show a commitment to addressing disparities in transportation safety, access, and public health outcomes.

- **Vision (25% of score)** – Smart Growth America is seeking state legislator champions with a desire to lead change in their state and a vision of changes they believe are needed. Champions do not need to have a specific initiative identified going into the program, but should have ideas about where they see potential opportunities.
- **Need for technical assistance (25% of score)** – The State Legislator Champions Institute is seeking state elected leaders that are interested in legislative strategies that support smart growth and/or sustainable communities development but need additional strategic support, expertise, or peer exchange to move efforts forward.
- **Ability to commit to time requirements (25% of score)** – Applicants should affirm their commitment to fully participating in all functions if selected for the State Legislator Champions Institute. While Champions may include staff in the sessions, they must commit to attending the sessions themselves.

Other factors that will affect the selection of communities to participate in the State Legislator Champions Institute:

- **Geographic diversity** – To the extent possible, the State Legislator Champions Institute participants and/or communities should reflect a variety of states, regions, and communities and with a diverse set of populations.

Application deadline

The deadline for Smart Growth America Technical Assistance applications is **December 22, 2022** at 11:59 pm EST. Applications shall be uploaded to the Smart Growth America web page application portal by this time. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed.

Questions about the process?

For more information, please visit our website or direct questions to Giancarlo Valdetaro at [<giancarlo.valdetaro@t4america.org>](mailto:giancarlo.valdetaro@t4america.org)