

SCI Pilot Cities Program Description

BACKGROUND: A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Since its inception in 2002, The Home Depot Foundation (the Foundation) has focused its resources on two primary areas of community development: green affordable housing production/preservation and urban forestry. The Foundation has aligned itself with key national non-profit organizations versed in these arenas. Partnerships with these organizations have helped the Foundation become a recognized thought leader and prominent funder supporting the creation of green affordable housing and sustainable communities.

The Foundation believes that access to healthy, efficient and safe housing is the first requirement for families to live successful lives. In demonstration of a long-term commitment to this, the Foundation has announced a \$400 million investment to build green affordable housing and create healthy communities over the next 10 years.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Local communities across the United States have embraced environmental sustainability as they better understand its value related to reducing energy costs, improving air quality, addressing issues of water quality and quantity, mitigating impacts of sprawl as well as ultimately the impacts of all of these issues upon human health.

Mayors and local communities are leading the way in the green movement to preserve natural resources, reduce energy consumption, reduce operating costs and waste, create green jobs and enhance the quality of life of their residents. Cities as varied as Los Angeles (CA), Asheville (NC), Fayetteville (AR), and Dearborn (MI) have adopted comprehensive sustainability plans and hired sustainability officers.

However, in its role as funder, the Foundation has heard many local community officials report challenges with sustainability planning and implementation. Despite the long-term, integrated systems approach that is required for effective sustainability planning and programming, many local communities are still addressing sustainability issues and challenges in a piecemeal fashion. Consequently, progress towards meeting various sustainability targets has been tempered by setbacks and failures. Necessary inter-agency coordination and community buy-in for sustainability efforts are challenging to achieve, particularly as budgets tighten. City staff members often fail to collaborate across departments, lack the proper tools, and fail to see sustainability planning and implementation as a high priority. Many officials also note that sustainability plans are often not systematically implemented, responsibility and roles are not clearly defined, and staffing levels and funding sources are unspecified. Finally, effective public/private partnerships can be difficult to develop, and consensus-building among key stakeholders can be difficult to achieve.

Despite these challenges, the Foundation is poised to bring about broad-scale change within local communities that reflects our collective (re)commitment to a sustainable future. It is the Foundation's aim to chart the course for local success through the Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI).

MISSION OF THE SUSTAINABLE CITIES INSTITUTE

The mission of the Sustainable Cities Institute is to be a valuable, trusted resource for local governments and communities working to create lasting, meaningful change toward sustainability. SCI achieves its mission by providing web-based information, technical support and facilitation of collaborative sustainability planning and implementation projects that enhance the long-term health, efficiency, affordability and livability of communities.

STRUCTURE OF THE SUSTAINABLE CITIES INSTITUTE

The Sustainable Cities Institute is designed as a virtual institute in that we are located primarily on our website. The website (www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org) provides carefully vetted materials and best practices that local sustainability officers and other municipal users can utilize to support their work. The website launched in December 2009 and will be continuously updated to create a “community of learning”. The site also offers a restricted discussion forum for sustainability officers across the country as well as an open forum for the general public.

In addition to this, the site is intended to showcase Pilot Cities projects. Initially, two pilot cities will be chosen to participate. Cities must demonstrate a reasonably established and successful sustainability effort, though we are not looking for established and well-known leaders within sustainability. The pilot cities will be chosen for their ability to demonstrate for other cities the path to sustainability with all pitfalls and successes transparently presented.

The Sustainable Cities Institute has engaged national and regional leaders with expertise in a variety of sustainability topics. These leaders can tap into an even wider network of expertise, all in support of cities engaged in sustainability initiatives.

SCI PILOT CITIES PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Implementation

The SCI Pilot Cities program will be collaborative, thus we expect each location to help us define a process for success in their city. At a minimum, we see an SCI project team with the following primary participants:

- **SCI Core Team**

The SCI core team is comprised of:

- The Home Depot Foundation’s Sustainable Community Development Program Manager
- Southface (Program Coordinator and Staffing)
- Center for Neighborhood Technology (Senior Advisory Partner)
- ICLEI (Senior Advisory Partner)
- Additional consultants from our network as necessary

- **The Local Government**

Leadership of the program within the selected cities is a local decision but needs to be well considered. Logically, the government sustainability office could lead the program, but if that office is lacking budget for implementation, the local non-profit may take the lead if government departmental cooperation is demonstrated. The city will need a primary contact person who will be responsible for directing the local government’s activities as it relates to the program.

- **The Non-Profit Partner**

All projects will be required to have a non-profit organizational partner (501c-3) to meet the program's goals of community-based involvement and leveraged support. The non-profit may be a community based sustainability advocate, major non-profit housing developer, Quasi Government agency, other NGO or a University. The non-profit must have a demonstrated history of convening and successfully facilitating diverse stakeholder groups. It should also have a mission that is aligned with the SCI sustainability principles found at http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/sustainable_city. Lastly, a portion of the funding will be needed to support a local liaison that will assist in coordination efforts, development of reports, etc. This person could be "housed" in either the offices of the non-profit partner or the local government office.

While project staffing requirements are flexible and will be evaluated in the context of the application, it is expected that the program will justify a full-time position which will be funded through the non-profit partner organization. Additionally, there is flexibility as to where the position may be housed. The application should clarify which organization is to house the position and delineate the fiscal responsibilities for the position.

Importantly, the non-profit partner must have a minimum 5-year organizational history and a record of sound fiscal practice as they will receive and manage SCI grant funds. Funding will be disbursed quarterly based upon the achievement of pre-identified project milestones.

- **Local Foundation and Philanthropy Community**

All applicants will need to identify cooperating and follow-on funding opportunities through the local Foundation and philanthropy community.

The SCI core team will work closely with local teams in the selected cities to refine areas of focus, to lead project *Charrettes*, and to assist the mayor, department heads, business leaders, and other stakeholders with crafting an implementation strategy and monitoring program for their city's sustainability initiative.

Development of proposals and materials during the selection process as well as local leadership of the project may reside in either the local government or in the non-profit partner. Funding agreements between the local partners must be disclosed prior to selection.

Selection Process

On April 1, 2010, a Letter of Intent (LOI) will be made available to a variety of cities that represents a wide spectrum of sustainability efforts. The deadline for submittal of the LOI will be April 30, 2010. The completed LOIs will be vetted by the SCI team and advisory group. From the cities that completed an LOI, a group of 6-8 will be asked to submit a full proposal. This RFP will be available electronically around May 17, 2010, and will be due on June 15, 2010. A stipend of between \$3,750 will be available to offset proposal preparation costs. The grant agreement that the Foundation will be utilizing for this program will be made available around May 17th so that interested cities and their non-profit partners may have time to review it with their respective legal departments. The four finalists will be chosen on July 1, 2010.

The SCI core team will visit four finalist cities to conduct a mini-Sustainability Scan which evaluates existing sustainability efforts, organizational infrastructure and resources. The mini-scan is organized around the criteria being developed by ICLEI within the STAR Community Index and is focused on emerging federal funding for sustainability initiatives. The on-site mini-scan will take place between **September 1 and October 15, 2010**. The mini-scan will include:

- a review of the City's sustainability plan (if complete) and initiatives,
- in-depth interviews with the non-profit partner and its references,

- meetings with local foundations to assess potential for future financial support of the initiative, and
- conversations with other stakeholders as determined by the team.

The mini-scan will identify both known and hidden opportunities for local sustainability plans and initiatives. The results of the mini-scan will be shared with each finalist city in a formal presentation at a local venue in the hopes that it will prove beneficial to local sustainability efforts, regardless of a successful application to the Pilot Cities program. For the two cities awarded the SCI City status, a full sustainability scan will be conducted after the decision is made. For the two cities that are runners-up, The Home Depot Foundation will provide a scholarship to help offset the cost of a full sustainability scan if the city desires to have one completed. The selection of the Pilot Cities will occur between **October 15 and October 22, 2010**, with signed grant agreements due back to the Foundation by **October 27, 2010**, the date of the announcement.

General Selection Criteria

The most important evaluation criterion is a policy environment that incorporates or is moving to incorporate sustainability as a significant assessment by which programs are evaluated.

The SCI Pilot Cities program is open to applications from qualifying cities*. SCI is seeking cities committed to a sustainability plan that are facing barriers to plan development or implementation or cities with a well-developed sustainability plan who are looking to build on prior successes in order to elevate programs to higher levels. For clarification of the following, the Foundation defines the initiative as a component or indicator of the plan, and is more broad-based than the project. The project doesn't necessarily have to be linked to sustainable affordable housing, although this is The Home Depot Foundation's preference. Projects that are linked to sustainable affordable housing may score higher. Applicants for the Pilot Cities program should propose at least one initiative and one project.

1. Sustainability Initiative: An initiative that meets a sustainability goal deemed a priority for the local community. For example, the initiative could be related to expansion, institutionalization or evolution of a general sustainability plan, greening government operations and facilities, sustainability legislation or policy development, a transportation alternative project, alternate energy source, wetlands recovery or any other environmental sustainability topic.
2. Housing Related Project: A component that promotes affordable housing through either a "sticks and bricks" or policy strategy. Follow-on funding may be available for projects that exhibit the greatest impact.
 - a. Examples:
 - i. Initiative = concentration on promoting TOD; Project = Housing project
 - ii. Initiative = Miami Green City; Project = Miami Eco-Lab
 - iii. Initiative = Minneapolis having walkability as a focus; Project = Pathways linking low income neighborhoods to greenspace or transportation

Additional well-defined and achievable objectives within the scope described in this program are welcome and will be evaluated within the context of the application.

*The terms "city" and "cities" are used for simplicity. However, the program is open to all forms of local government, i.e. government entities defined by geographical areas that are less than a state (typically town, city, county, or region) and characterized by officials elected by local residents.

The following outlines the general principles that should inform SCI Pilot Cities' applicants. They reflect the program's priorities but do NOT serve as the final criteria by which Pilot Cities will be accepted.

- Successful applicants must show a formal commitment to implementing a sustainability program in their local communities. However, this commitment does not have to take the form of a formally adopted comprehensive sustainability plan document or a long record of successful sustainability projects. It is more important that there be evidence of support for the proposed initiative and for environmentally sustainable goals within the major government and civic institutions.
- Applicants should demonstrate collaborations and partnerships among key local stakeholders (local government agencies, universities, business groups, neighborhood associations, community-based organizations, etc.), as well as cross-jurisdictional coordination where applicable. Participation by a local non-profit organization with a mission that is appropriately related to the proposed initiative will be required.
- A project city that is a strong program candidate will hold a significant share of regional population and/or economic activity.
- Project cities will have resident populations of 25,000 to 500,000.
- Priority will be given to cities that can demonstrate a history of regional leadership. Evidence of this may include extensive partnerships with other regional cities.
- Successful program applicants will not undergo a mayoral or other executive-level election or administration change during the two years of project implementation. This is required to ensure continued support of the project at the highest levels within the local government unit. Jurisdictions with mayoral elections scheduled before January 2013 may submit a binding policy or other document that evidences the jurisdiction's commitment to the project through its completion.
- The Foundation seeks to build capacity for sustainability implementation and thus desires projects with outcomes that include leaving a legacy of strengthened local civic infrastructure.
- Pilot Cities program applicants that demonstrate an existing or intended "sister city" relationship with another applicant will be viewed favorably. This relationship need not be formalized but can be characterized by a consistent and committed exchange of resources in support of mutual goals.

General Milestones

A two-year project timeline is expected, with the housing-related project commencing in that timeframe but not necessarily being completed.

Letters of Intent opened to target cities	April 1, 2010
Deadline for cities invited to apply (LOI)	April 30, 2010
Full application open to selected cities	May 17, 2010
Full application due	June 15, 2010
Notification to four program finalists	July 1, 2010
Deadline for Sustainability Scan & CAPP information	July 30, 2010
Sustainability scans/ site visits	Scheduled with city
Final selection of Pilot Cities	Oct. 15 - Oct. 22, 2010
Announcement of Pilot Cities	Oct. 27, 2010

Dates for the following project milestones will be set based on the needs of the specific projects:

Project engagement/announcement (official start date)	Approx. Nov. 1, 2010
Weekly project updates (1-page max.)	

Monthly learning reports (2-pages max.)
Quarterly project report
Final report

SCI template
SCI template

Program Funding

Selected SCI Pilot Cities will each receive **\$500,000** in funding from the Home Depot Foundation disbursed over the length of the project (two-year maximum). Payments will be made on a contingent upon the successful achievement of mutually agreed upon project milestones.

The Foundation is requiring two demonstrations of commitment. The first is that the city agrees to document the successes and challenges of the program on the SCI website in the form of a report or blog that will be public information. The second is financial. As part of the grant agreement, the Foundation requires that all cities selected as pilot cities provide direct funds in the amount determined below. The direct funds need to be clearly marked for the program/initiative that was submitted under the SCI Pilot City application. The direct funding sources can include other local non-profits, NGOs, foundations, the private sector, universities or the city itself.

Funding Commitment:

City population of > 100,000 people	Funding requirement = \$100,000
City population of < 100,000 people	Funding requirement = \$50,000

Beyond the direct funding of the program/initiative, additional direct or indirect commitments will be looked upon favorably in the selection process.

It is important to the Foundation that the SCI Pilot Cities projects succeed and continue beyond the official program timeline. Our goal is to show measurable success and to inspire other funders to help the local project expand its impact. Consequently, the local non-profit partner will be expected to demonstrate a relationship with local and other funding sources likely to support the continuation of the project. Additionally, the Home Depot Foundation will work to actively leverage SCI Pilot Cities funding with local and national philanthropic organizations.

Project Agreement

Selected non-profits and local governments will be expected to sign a formal agreement defining the roles and expectations of all project team members including inter-party relationships, funding mechanisms, program monitoring, and reporting. A key stipulation in the contract will be that the Pilot Cities program will be a collaborative effort among all parties. Any amendments to the project scope, milestones, or methodology must be pre-approved by the Program Coordinator (Southface).