

THE USDN INNOVATION FUND 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

2016 at a Glance. In 2016, the USDN Innovation Fund (IF) invested \$845,600 to support 63 core and associate USDN member-communities. Of the 17 funded projects:

- \$263,700 supported 5 Impacts RFP awards, designed to gather information on how urban sustainability innovations impact how members do their jobs and collaborate with each other, across departments, and with external partners
- \$537,271 supported 6 General RFP awards, designed to advance urban sustainability innovations through a pathway starting with ideation and ending in scaling
- \$18,739 supported 4 Technical Assistance (TA) mini-grants to foster stronger project design in 2016 General RFP grant proposals
- \$25,000 supported continued advancement of a sustainability indicators dashboard, in partnership with the [STAR Communities](#)
- \$890 supported travel for 2 members to compete [RentRocket](#) (a phased USDN IF grant project) at a 2016 [MIT Climate CoLab](#) Contest

The IF also closed and [posted products](#) from 22 awards. Outcomes from closing projects in 2 experimental RFPs were analyzed:

- **Quick Funds (QF).** The 2015 QF grant cycle funded 3 awards that focused on adaptation and equitable community engagement. These projects exceeded expectations and captured valuable insights and lessons. All 3 grants had minor adjustments to their work plan to improve outcomes, and all 3 created or are creating actionable follow-on work.
- **Regional Networks (RN).** Two 2014-15 RN RFPs resulted in 9 awards. Since, RN participation has improved in all types of competitive IF RFPs, providing dissemination opportunities for IF products to non-USDN member communities. The opportunity to collaborate and foster partnerships was mentioned as the most valuable collective impact from RN awards

Member Driven. USDN members who serve on the IF Steering Committee (SC) devote many hours over the course of a year to provide fund guidance and insure the IF is investing in scalable innovations that can impact how cities operate. SC members develop the annual IF strategy, provide inputs on RFP design for innovation grants, and select the recipients of the Innovation Fund grants. 2016 SC members include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catherine Hurley; Evanston, IL • Cori Burbach; Dubuque, IA • David Driskell; Boulder, CO • Doug Smith; Vancouver, B.C. • Erin Gill; Knoxville, TN • Glen Hadwen; Ft. Lauderdale, FL • Jacqui Bauer; Bloomington, IN (co-chair) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Green; Burlington, VT • Jo Zientek; San Jose, CA • Leslie Ethen; Tucson, AZ • Matt Naud; Ann Arbor, MI • Shannon Parry; Santa Monica, CA • Timothy Burroughs; Berkeley, CA (co-chair) • Wayne Feiden; Northampton, MA |
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Contents. This annual report contains: the USDN Context (pg. 1), the IF Strategy (pg. 1), IF Impact (pg. 3), and Highlights from Completed Projects (pg. 5). A full list of 2016 grants is in Appendix 1 (pg. 8).

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORK (USDN) CONTEXT

Collaboration Remains a Core Value. When USDN first created the IF, many members were the first sustainability directors in their communities. Building a funding mechanism for collaborative work on sustainable urban innovations was intended not only accelerate the development of the sustainability field, but also to simply foster working relationships between new peers. Peer exchange continues to be a core value of USDN and the IF.



An Increasing Focus on Impact. In 2017, USDN begins implementing a member-adopted long term strategic plan, which marks a notable shift from measuring success based on member participation to measuring success by impacts in member communities. The Strategic Plan establishes these 4 goals:

- Maintain and Evolve the Peer Exchange
- Incentivize Innovation of High-Impact Sustainability Practices to Create Impact
- Accelerate Adoption of High-Impact Sustainability Practices to Create Impact
- Enhance Organizational Effectiveness

Accordingly, the USDN IF 2017 strategic plan includes measuring grant success with a greater focus on impacts in member communities.

The USDN Family of Funds. Each member of the USDN Family of Funds¹ plays a role in advancing urban sustainability innovations, and the USDN IF coordinates with each fund on a regular and institutionalized basis to benefit grantees. A Grant Navigation Tool is available to members ([here](#)). It provides overviews and annual timelines of each USDN fund and links to RFPs and other relevant resources. This resource also provides overarching context for each fund, to help members determine which ones are designed to best meet their current needs.

USDN INNOVATION FUND STRATEGY

The IF Mission. *To assist USDN members and their partners in collaborating to identify, develop, and scale high-impact solutions that advance urban sustainability.*²

Growing Investment in Urban Sustainability Innovations. Since 2009, The Innovation Fund has granted over \$3.6 million, supporting and impacting how cities operate in 106 different member communities.

¹ The USDN [Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance](#), USDN Peer Learning Exchange, and [Partners for Places](#) (administered by the Funders Network for Smart and Livable Communities)

² The USDN IF defines “high impact solutions” as innovations that allow urban sustainability directors to change established governance and operational structures by finding new and better ways for local governments to improve social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.

IF Success. The Innovation Fund is successful in part because USDN funding partners are flexible with pooled resources and comfortable accepting risk from experimenting with sustainable urban innovations – a luxury that cities can often not afford from both political and budgetary standpoints.

As of release of this report, 6 funders are providing \$560,000 for 2017:

- Barr - \$70,500
- Bloomberg - \$186,600
- JPB - \$126,900
- Kresge - \$50,700
- Summit - \$84,600
- Surdna - \$47,000



Supported by dedicated members and committed funders, the IF has become established and respected as a lean and adaptable mechanism that reflects and supports member priorities. The question moving forward is no longer can members collaborate to affect change in their communities, but what have these collaborations accomplished so far, and how do we want to use or change them in the future?

Defining Innovation. For the USDN IF, an innovation involves the identification, development, and scaling of a new way for local government to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity in urban sustainability. An innovation can be a policy, practice, tool, program, performance standard, or organizational model. Innovations proceed through a set of stages, shown in Figure 1.

- **Identifying / Developing** (green and blue dots). Identifying an innovation, researching and conceptualizing it for prototyping, testing, and refining
- **Scaling** (orange dots). Spreading a proven innovation to other communities through standardization and adoption

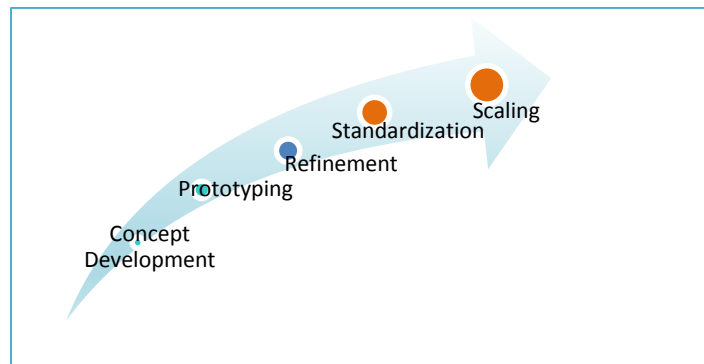


Figure 1. Innovation Pathway

Long Term Goal. The SC’s long-term goal is that by 2018, the Fund’s activities in urban sustainability will have: 1) Accelerated on-the-ground impact of key sustainability practice fields³; 2) Attracted a large

³ USDN members define and prioritize key sustainability practice fields through surveys, USDN user groups, and USDN strategic plans. The IF’s growing body of work is represented in 20 topical categories, found [here](#). The breadth / depth of this content reflects the complexity of the urban systems sustainability directors impact.

amount of public, private and philanthropic investment in key innovations⁴; and 3) Positioned North American local governments as “go to” sources for innovation⁵.

Measuring Success. In 2016, the SC developed a set of baseline metrics for the IF. The following metric categories are the focus of the initial portfolio data assessment: Participation, Collaboration, Investment Distribution, Geographic Reach, Outcome Assessment, and Leverage.

USDN INNOVATION FUND IMPACT

Member Satisfaction. The 2016 USDN Member Satisfaction Survey indicates 80% of USDN Member highly value the Innovation Fund (Figure 2).

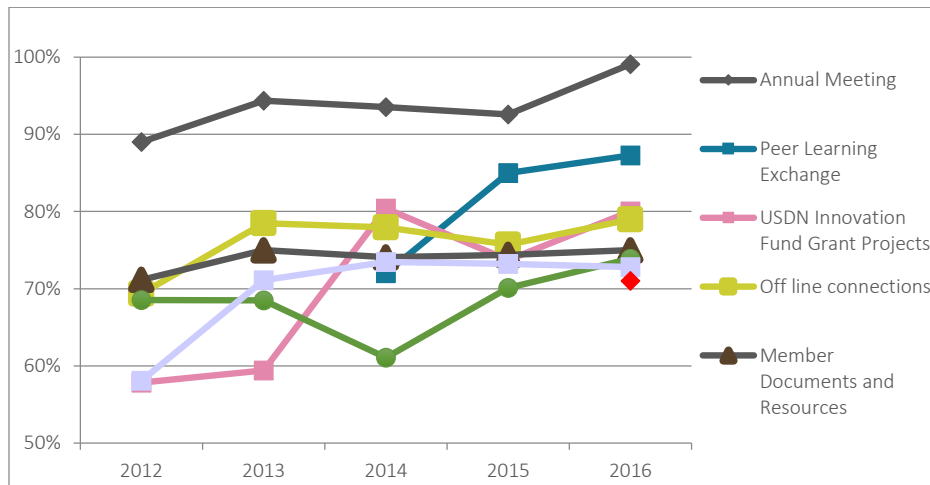


Figure 2. % Respondents Rate Activity as High Value (2012 – 2016)

Member Engagement. Most engaged members are likely to have participated in multiple USDN IF projects and Peer Learning Exchanges (PLE): nearly 50% of respondents have participated in a PLE or IF project, and many have received more than one grant (Figure 3).

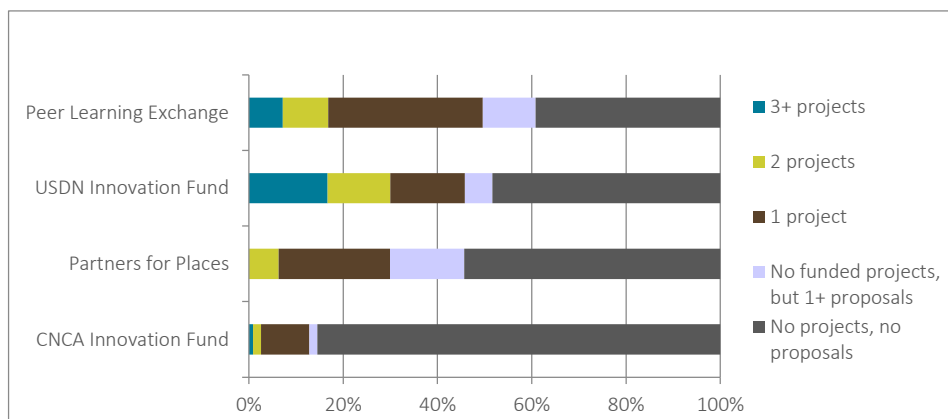


Figure 3. Participation in USDN Grant Program Funded Projects

⁴ As of December 2016, the IF has re-granted over \$3.6 million, investing in 89 projects, 20% of which have leveraged over \$ 1.5 million in philanthropic, local, state, and federal support.

⁵ The Fund serves 164 USDN members: 106 communities have participated in at least 1 grant, and 43 different USDN member cities have led a collaborative grant. 57% of the completed projects have generated follow-on work, and 60% of completed grants have generated external field-building partnerships.

Member Impact. The IF has supported almost all of the high interest products, either through past or present specific grant projects, or through supporting topical grants, like those dealing with equity. The 2016 USDN Member Satisfaction Survey asked: “Have any of the following USDN projects (all completed projects listed) had an impact on your community’s sustainability efforts?” People who selected “has impacted our work” grew from 56 in 2013 to nearly 600 in 2016. In that same time period, the number completed projects has grown from 13 to nearly 50 (Figure 4. Full survey results, [here](#)).

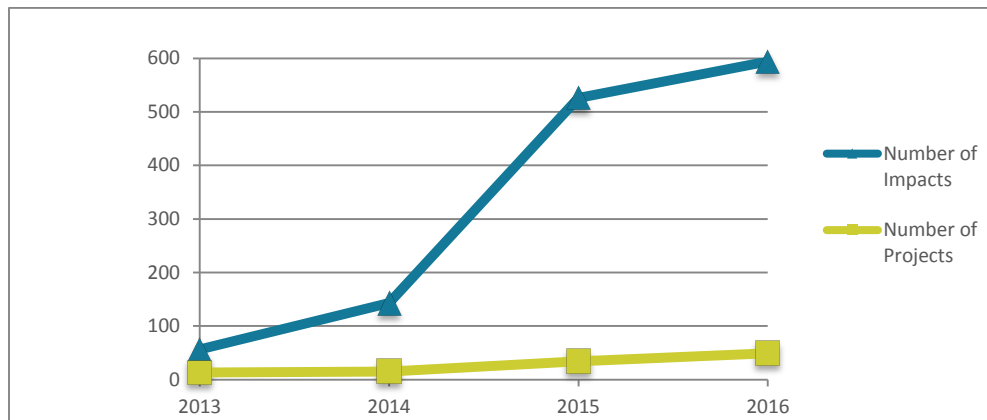


Figure 4. Impacts of USDN Innovation Projects Over Time

How IF Impact is Achieved by the Steering Committee. The IF Steering Committee (SC) identified 7 strategic goals with specific actionable strategies to guide the fund in 2016:

1. Improve Idea Sourcing from Members: define the Steering Committee bar
2. Expand the fund’s definition of Collaboration
3. Experiment with funding for Implementation
4. Continue testing and investing in Dissemination of Innovation Fund Products
5. Improve Grantee Accountability to the Fund
6. Eliminate any perceived bias around Awards Selection Process
7. Clarify expectations for proposal writing and project completion

Notable 2016 IF Work Plan Achievements (Appendix 2: full work plan with accomplishments by goal).

- 4 USDN User Groups participated in 2016 IF grants: Climate Change Preparedness, Equity and Access, Food Systems, and Sustainable Consumption
- 1 new lead city received a 2016 General RFP Grant
- 3 new Phased Grants: the spring Impacts RFP produced 1, the fall General RFP produced 2
- The fall General RFP brought in 3 grants with a strong focus on cross-departmental collaboration
- Spring and Fall grant rounds established 6 new projects with strong external partnerships
- The fall General RFP funded 3 projects that utilized USDN Specialist members
- 3 implementation focused grants were funded, falling into the scaling portion of the pathway
- 2 fall General RFP awards feature RN participation (DART, GLCAN) – 1 proposed in spring
- 22 grants closed in 2016, showing improved awareness of project completion expectations



Experimenting with Impact Grants. In spring of 2016, the Steering Committee requested proposals that focused on impacts, by either showing how lessons from initial work on an innovation influences the proposed next steps, or by finishing the next step of the work. The RFP also focused on testing better ways to gather information on how

urban sustainability innovations impact how members do their jobs and collaborate with each other, across departments, and / or with external partners. Impact grants will be evaluated in 2017.

Providing Technical Assistance. Increased Technical Assistance (TA) strengthens project proposals and targeted outcomes. Provided during the proposal-writing phase of a grant, it improves clarity and focus, so awarded projects have a solid foundation on which to begin their work. In addition to TA for each proposer from the Fund Manager and Steering Committee members, \$18,739 was awarded to 4 General RFP proposals. These funds enabled partners to become fully engaged during project development - as opposed to after the project was proposed and the award was made.

In 2016, 22 Innovation Fund projects came to fruition, providing USDN members with new tools, scans, and best practices. As grant projects are completed, they are posted on the USDN website for internal and external use. Projects completed in 2016 are listed in Table 1 (below) and linked to their products:

HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMPLETED PROJECTS

Table 1. USDN IF Projects that completed in 2016.

Innovation Category	Grants Completed in 2016
Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New England Design and Resiliency Teams (Quick Funds Grant) • Climate Adaptation Tools in the Arid West (Regional Networks Grant) • USDN Climate Adaptation Planning Project (Commissioned Project Grant) • Climate Adaptation Framework and Indicator Evaluation (General RFP Grant) • GHG Reduction RFI and Evaluation Toolkit (Quick Funds Grant) • Cascadia Region Urban Forestry and Adaptation Convening and Tree Procurement Paper (Breakthrough Convening Grant)
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle Extreme Heat Scenario-Based Pilot-Project in Frontline Communities - Racial Equity Evaluation (Quick Funds Grant) • Municipal Workplace and Neighborhood Challenge (General RFP Grant) • Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) for Drought Response in California (Regional Networks Grant) • Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) in the Southeast (Regional Networks Grant)

Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Rental Housing App: RentRocket (General RFP Grant) • Shared-Use Mobility Toolkit (General RFP Grant) • Leading STAR Community Indicators (General RFP Grant) • Smart Cities Strategies (General RFP Grant)
Policy / Government Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Purchasing Playbook for Cities (General RFP Grant) • Sustainable Consumption (Phase II Grant) • Financing Sustainable Cities Scan and Toolkit (General RFP Grant)
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-User Microgrids & District Energy Analysis (General RFP Grant) • Energy Systems Transformation Framework (General RFP Grant) • USDN Innovation Fund Product - Building Capacity for Climate and Energy Actions in Michigan (Regional Networks Grant)
Urban Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Agriculture Dissemination in the Heartland (Regional Networks Grant) • Urban Agriculture in the Midwest (Regional Networks Grant)

Completed in 2016: Phased work on RentRocket. This project created a prototype rental housing website at RentRocket.org that aims to (1) help renters consider sustainability factors (such as utility costs) alongside other factors (such as rent) when making housing decisions and (2) help landlords recognize the value of sustainability investments as a marketable asset. This innovative work gained national attention as a 2016 MIT Climate CoLab contest winner. The project was selected from among nearly 500 proposals submitted to the CoLab platform. The team presented the project at the Climate CoLab's Crowds & Climate Conference in late September at MIT in Cambridge, MA.

Completed in 2016: Phased work on STAR Community Indicators. The Leading STAR Community Indicators project created a subset of the existing STAR Community Rating System metrics that any city can easily incorporate into their annual reporting. The STAR Leading Indicators are an entry point into sustainability measurement and tracking that can lead into full STAR certification. Working group members met in person in Washington, DC early in the project to decide on a set of metrics that were representative of the STAR system - as well as balanced between local and national data sets/collection. A web-based dashboard tool was ultimately developed to enable users to see aggregate or average data for all participating communities and individual data for participating cities on a local dashboard site. This project strengthened the USDN partnership with STAR Communities, which is hosting and maintaining the Leading Indicators web-based tool.

2015 Award of Note: Urban Biodiversity Inventory Framework. The 2015 General RFP awarded a grant to the City of St. Louis, MO to create an Urban Biodiversity Inventory Framework that provides a methodology USDN members can use to guide their efforts to track and restore urban biodiversity. To meet the grant objectives, the team is focused primarily on developing a framework which will: (1) identify what biological/ecological data is most important for cities to inventory; (2) describe how the data should be collected and organized; and (3) guide how the data collected should be used to target priority biodiversity conservation needs and opportunities in a given urban community. The framework will be designed at both a general level for standardized reference and use, as well as in a customizable format that is meant to accommodate any USDN member biodiversity program, regardless of ecoregion. This project is the first IF award to focus on urban biodiversity.

Completed in 2016: Sustainable Procurement Playbook for Cities. The 2014 General RFP award developed a playbook for sustainability directors and city teams interested in launching or strengthening their city's sustainable purchasing efforts. The Playbook includes analytical tools, best practices, implementation tips, and recommendations to help cities prioritize and then pursue sustainable purchasing opportunities that maximize environmental, health and economic benefits in major purchasing categories in their communities. *The Buck Starts Here: Sustainable Procurement Playbook for Cities* contains 10 chapters explaining how to build the business case for sustainable procurement, create a sustainable procurement policy and program, identify sustainable procurement priorities, develop contracts for sustainable goods and services, and track the resulting environmental and economic benefits. The *Playbook* also details sustainable procurement strategies for three high-impact product categories chosen by the project participants: electronics, fleet vehicles and building materials. This project was presented at the 2016 USDN Annual Meeting in Toronto, ON.

2015 General RFP Award: Climate Equity Planning. This 2015 General RFP award develops a planning model to assist cities in their efforts to embed equity into their climate preparedness planning work. The model being developed identifies specific climate resilience strategies, which advances both equity and climate preparedness goals as well community engagement tactics. It also provides transferrable lessons for the communities who need it most. Case studies will be produced that detail techniques used and lessons learned in the testing cities. The model and case studies are being built for scalability to all USDN members. This award builds on an earlier 2015 Quick Funds award focused on community preparedness engagement. There is a mounting interest within USDN about the nexus of climate adaptation and social equity issues.



APPENDIX 1: 2016 USDN Innovation Fund RFP Awards

2016 USDN Innovation Fund Awards				
#	Grant Name	Amount	Lead City	Grant Purpose
Impact Grants				
1	Utah Climate Action Network Expansion	\$52,000.00	Salt Lake City, UT	To build the technical and leadership capacity of local government for initiating climate change policy and planning within the political and culturally conservative backdrop of Utah. This grant will utilize peer-to-peer policy-level conversations, climate challenge discussions, and on-going collaboration, coordination, and sharing of best practices and applied innovation to create levers for system change.
2	Shared Mobility Toolkit Expansion & Training	\$76,000.00	Los Angeles, CA	To enable USDN core members, associate members, and partners to become more familiar with and make additions to the Shared Mobility Toolkit supported by The Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC). The proposed additions to the tools will make it easier for users of the toolkit to upload new information, share resources, and learn from each other. Training webinars and the technical assistance will help Cities take full advantage of the toolkit and provide reasoned analysis that can be used in policy development or other decision-making.
3	Beyond the Ban: Preventing Plastic Packaging	\$50,000.00	Providence, RI	To build on previous work on sustainable consumption, compostable plastics and community engagement and explore disruptive interventions and policies. This grant purpose is to prevent the release of plastics into the environment and reduce the burden of managing plastics on municipalities.
4	Sustainable Economic Development Convening	\$45,700.00	Park Forest, IL	To conduct a breakthrough convening workshop to advance the emerging and evolving field of Sustainable Economic Development (SED).
5	Methane Leaks in Gas Distribution Lines	\$40,000.00	San Jose, CA	To synthesize the available information on methane leaks in natural gas distribution lines into a useful document to guide the development of policy and program options for local and regional actions. This will give local and regional governments a strong research platform from which to make decisions and develop and implement policies. Further, this project, with help from a stakeholder group of cities and non-governmental organizations, will develop a Natural Gas Action Strategy - a set of policy options and an analysis useful for prioritizing action.
Technical Assistance Mini- Grants				
6	Illegal Dumping	\$4,964.00	San Jose, CA	To produce a strong General RFP proposal
7	Smart Cities	\$5,000.00	Pittsburgh, PA	To produce a strong General RFP proposal
8	Recycling Economy	\$5,000.00	Reno, NV	To produce a strong General RFP proposal
9	Consumption GHG	\$3,775.00	Vancouver BC	To produce a strong General RFP proposal
General RFP				
10	USDN GLCAN Vulnerability Assessment Template and Scenario Development	\$62,133.00	Ann Arbor, MI	To collaborate with ~10 cities from the Great Lakes region to understand how vulnerability assessments are currently being used to inform decisions and then collaboratively create a template VA and associated process that can replace these disparate assessments.
11	Design and Resiliency Teams (DARTs)	\$65,000.00	Northampton, MA	To offer four communities the opportunity for a Design and Resiliency Team (DART) to provide three days of an intense design charrette to help each community advance local resilience solutions through public conversation, a final presentation and a final report.

12	Responsible Event Program	\$100,000.00	Eugene, OR	To work with 7 Primary Cities to 1) formalize the use of an event triple bottom line framework and 2) develop resources and tools to support the local 'enabling environment sectors' critical to successful program delivery.
13	Renewable Heating & Cooling: Thermal Decarbonization of Residential Buildings	\$115,000.00	Boulder, CO	To support the advancement of thermal decarbonization programs and policy development. This project integrates the initial planning frameworks and thermal decarbonization tools developed in earlier efforts into a multi-city coordinated implementation strategy.
14	ecoCity Footprint Tool Pilot	\$112,838.00	Victoria, BC	To further develop a new tool that has promise for meeting not only basic GHG reporting needs but also to advance the emerging practice of consumption-based emissions inventories. Vancouver recently completed its consumption-based inventory using the prototype ecoCity Footprint Tool (Phase 1 of the Tool development). The Tool provided Vancouver specific, measureable impacts of consumption, both in terms of energy (GHG emissions) and materials (ecological footprint). Given the successes in using the Tool with Vancouver, it is proposed that the Tool be further refined and piloted to test its potential for broader use by USDN members.
15	Behavior Change-Based Sustainability Marketing	\$82,300.00	Washington, D.C.	To address the city level barriers from marketing of sustainability efforts, this project develops and scales an existing prototype of a customized training on the basics of marketing for sustainability directors. It is based on successful case studies and evaluations of USDN cities materials compared to best practices.

APPENDIX 2: 2016 USDN Innovation Fund Completed Work Plan

2016 USDN Innovation Fund Work Plan - Complete		
2016 IF Goal	Strategy	Outcome Highlights
Improve Idea Sourcing from Members: define the Steering Committee bar	Promote User Group alignment around potential products to gather member consensus around collaborative projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund Manager worked with USDN staff to route 2017 user groups into collaboration or peer learning categories. In 2017, Collaboration User Group chairs will be coached on USDN's Family of Funds. The following user groups participated in grants that were active during 2016: Climate Change Preparedness User Group; Equity and Access User Group; Food Systems User Group; Sustainable Consumption User Group.
	Promote new grant leads to help build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee Members had success with in person outreach at annual meeting. The General RFP round produced one grant with new grant lead (Victoria, BC).
	Use the annual meeting to serve as an idea generator, a dissemination tool, and to build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual meeting open space pitch session was well received with good participation. Based on cities listed on the 5 LOIs that submitted proposals, 32 cities signed on that were not initially committed to these projects. 3 of the 6 General RFP awarded grants did not submit an LOI or receive TA funds.
	Build on the work that's been done in other collaborations to promote phased work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 grants closed in 2016. One phase II grant was awarded in the spring round Two Phase 2 grants were awarded in the fall round.
Expand the fund's definition of Collaboration	Additional multi-departmental/agency teams are formed to advance projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 62 partners were added to the running partner list from IF grant participation during 2016.
	More projects result in cross-departmental co-benefits; more people are at the table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Impacts Grants did not bring a strong cross-departmental coordination plan. The fall General RFP brought in 3 grants with a strong focus on cross-departmental collaboration.
	New relationships are developed with partners (i.e. APA, APWA, GFOA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Impacts Grants: 4 out of 5 grants brought on new partners with a total of 21 new partners added to the Partner list. Fall LOIs showed good partner integration. All fall General RFP awards had strong partnerships with established consultants or non-profit organizations.
	Projects leverage additional in-house skill sets to improve projects and build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist member list was started for the Innovation Fund to be updated at each grant award. The fall General RFP funded 3 projects that utilized USDN Specialist members.
Experiment with funding for Implementation	The fund gains a better understanding of what members mean / want by implementation funds to successfully pilot them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring and Fall RFPs encouraged implementation focused projects. 3 implementation focused grants were funded and fell into the standardization/scaling pathway.
	The fund has a clear understanding of what previous implementation investments looked like, and learns from them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tracking matrix integrated into baseline metrics spreadsheet to track implementation investment.

	Consider providing funds for implementation projects that leverage previous network investment (i.e. PLE grant, user group conversation, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring RFP did not produce any implementation focused grants. • The fall general RFP produced 3 implementation focused grants.
Continue testing and investing in Dissemination of Innovation Fund Products	The annual meeting is used strategically to advance training and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 of the 2016 Toronto sessions (not including the pitch session) involved topics of innovation products.
	Regional networks are using learning from the Innovation Fund to build capacity in their networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 RN lead grant proposal in the Spring Round - was not accepted but encouraged towards the fall round. • Fund Manager presented to RNCC on 07.21.16. • 2 fall General RFP Awards had RN participation. (DART, GLCAN)
	Partners, funders, and user groups are leveraged as dissemination vehicles for innovation fund projects and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2017, Collaboration User Group chairs will be coached on USDN's Family of Funds. • 2 of the 5 spring awards had effective dissemination through partners. • All 6 fall general RFP awards had strong partnerships for dissemination.
	Dissemination is incorporated into the original design of projects/proposals in order to leverage past products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Impacts Awards all had dissemination incorporated into the proposals in a measurable way. • Spring Impacts RFP produced 1 phased grant. • Fall General RFP produced 2 phased grants
	USDN increases activities to disseminate Innovation Fund lessons and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published 7 editions of the Innovation News in 2016, each featuring posted grant products from each USDN fund.
Improve Grantee Accountability to the Fund	Provide technical assistance around project management in order to clarify expectations for recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the TA mini-grants and LOI feedback, Fund manager fielded emails and calls from 18 USDN members considering proposals / wanting advice.
	Implement a "phased payment" policy for releasing funds directly to cities to provide more ability to hold cities accountable for expected deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring and Fall Awards used a 50% up front, 40% in progress, and 10% final payment upon deliverables payment method.
	Be more proactive in identifying and addressing potential issues/delays to protect IF deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant extension request was created and is in use. • Reminders are calendared and sent to grantees. • Invoices are held until grantee requests an extension or deliverables are received.
Eliminate any perceived bias around Awards Selection Process	Level the playing field for members without inside knowledge to the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Navigation Tool was kept up to date each time and RFP was released in 2016.
	Foster better decision-making by discussing each proposal regardless of score ranking to eliminate rushing through awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All awards were discussed in full in 2016.
	Systematically eliminate the perception of conflict of interest for transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 RFPs were modified to explicitly state SC involvement in the scoring process if they were proposing. • SC members did not pitch / score proposals that they participated in.
Clarify expectations for proposal writing and project completion	Add clarity and consistency to each scoring criteria for better quality proposals with better project follow-through, so reviewers and applicants understand desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both RFPs have totally re-worked scoring criteria to speak to USDN IF goals.
	Modify process without making applications more cumbersome to standardize best granting practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both RFPs adhere to the 5 pages or less proposal requirement and provide templates to use (LOI, Proposal, and Grant Reporting).

APPENDIX 3: 2017 USDN Innovation Fund Work Plan

2017 USDN Innovation Fund Work Plan - UNDERWAY		
IF Goal	Strategy and Desired Outcomes	Potential Actions
Improve Idea Sourcing from Members	Offer technical assistance through written and verbal feedback on letters of interest and proposals to help develop the innovation's context, hypothesis, and specific theory of change	Provide proposal support for Spring Experiments RFP.
		Host informational / pitch session calls for Spring RFP.
	Offer technical assistance through Mini-grants to support partnership and proposal development	Provide proposal support for Fall General RFP.
		Host informational / pitch session calls for Fall RFP.
Promote Product Leverage and Use	Improve communications around RFP opportunities and product releases	Provide proposal support for mini-grantees for Fall General RFP grant proposal development (With focus on partnership development).
		Use the IF products page on the USDN website to inform proposal development, shares lessons learned in the past on what works and what doesn't.
		Connect members, partners, and funders with similar interests.
		Fund Manager provides SC / USDN Staff with Talking Points for Spring RFP.
		Fund Manager provides SC / USDN Staff with Talking Points for Fall RFP.
	Continue to evaluate the IF portfolio and survey members for product use data	Keep the grants navigation tool up to date with all pertinent RFP information/documents.
		Co-chairs host open pitch session during the USDN Annual Meeting with support from Fund Manager.
		Keep current partner list up to date on the USDN website.
	Promote the IF products page as a resource that also supports proposal development	Fund Manager maintains and updates impacts metrics data with grant close out data.
		Fund Manager hosts debrief call for each grant at close out to capture lessons learned from grant process.
Advance Innovations through the Pathway	Design RFPs and scoring criteria to consider the multiplier effect: - Show the innovation in the context of previous work and stage of advancement - Encourage USDN member collaborations that break sector and departmental silos	Review questions and provide feedback on USDN Annual Innovation / Impacts Surveys to USDN staff.
		Publish Innovation e-News bi-monthly with links to recently posted innovation products.
		Direct proposers and grantees to IF products to use as a reference in refining the proposals / products.
Broaden Collaborative Participation	Target outreach to specific USDN member groups (i.e., user groups, members who haven't yet led or participated in a grant, regional networks, etc.) for: - Proposal development - Product uptake	Redesign Spring Experiments RFP to identify project focus on / advancement in innovation pathway and sector/silo breaking.
		Redesign Fall General RFP to identify project focus on / advancement in innovation pathway and sector/silo breaking.
		Track measurable metrics achieved by projects. Done during grant close outs.
		Work with USDN staff to route 2017 user groups into collaboration or peer learning categories.
		Collaboration User Group chairs will be coached on USDN's Family of Funds.
		Design Spring RFPs to incorporate language promoting collaboration with member groups.
		Design Fall RFPs to incorporate language promoting collaboration with member groups.
		Work to connect members with appropriate member groups during proposal development assistance.
Identify coordination between USDN external partners though phased grant work.		
Face to face outreach to members who haven't led or participated in a grant during the annual meeting.		
Keep proposal matchmaker updated year round to promote collaboration.		
Fund Manager maintains and updates impacts metrics data with member collaboration efforts identified in grant close out process.		