Annual Work Plan

Document Purpose

This document is designed to help a network develop its annual work plan. Emerging networks can use this document to create a robust plan that will set the network on a successful course. Existing networks can use it to improve on current plans.

It contains: Best Practice, Guidance, Worksheet Template, and an Appendix with examples.

Best Practice

A network's annual work plan gives direction and focus to the work of the group. An effective work plan outlines goals that the network wishes to achieve, and obstacles that must be overcome. The creation of an effective work plan is done in collaboration with a leadership team and/or the general membership to build buy in to the network's activities for the year. This guiding document breaks down overarching network objectives into categories of progress made by members.

It details specific steps that must be taken throughout the year in order to move forward on these tasks. It is critical for work plan steps to be measurable, so the network can track the progress and effectiveness of their efforts. It is also helpful to reference work and accomplishments from previous years, so members have a snapshot of where they have been and where they want to be. Work plans are a helpful reference document to share with funders when seeking coordination resources. Strong work plans clearly communicate where your network has been and where your network is going.

Guidance

Elements of an Annual Work Plan	
Vision/Mission Statement	Shows clear alignment between the purpose of the network and pursued work
Measurable Annual Goals	Projects and activities on which the network is actively working/wishes to work; these should be classified under the comprehensive annual goals and be specific enough that they are measureable and attainable
Work Progress/Activities	Detailed steps taken by members to achieve the measurable goals
Next Steps	Steps that need to be taken to make the annual goals a reality
Achievements from Previous Years	An appendix entry; these can be arranged in a matrix or table so members and funders can quickly reference what has been accomplished
Organizational Background	An appendix entry; a variety of information can be included in this section depending on the needs of the network; items include but are not limited to: • Governance Models • Funding Sources • Network Membership/Committees • Value Propositions • Network Health

Worksheet

1. Based on the vision/mission of the network, what goals would your organization like to achieve this fiscal year (for example: improved relationship development between members, build stronger relationships with members outside of the leadership team, evolve beyond information sharing to support collaborative work groups, identify and secure new funding opportunities)?

2. What projects and activities will support/achieve the overarching goals (for example: incorporate relationship building activities into the annual meeting, host quarterly information sharing webinars, create a funder briefing document to share with prospective funders)?

3. How can the network make specific goals that are measurable and attainable (keeping specific goals small and assigning responsibility)?

4. What is the network currently working on, and what progress has been / is being made (for example: increasing network bandwidth, growing membership, developing steering committees, annual conference organization, funding programs)?

5. Where does current work fall with regard to future goals, and is current work in line with the direction the network is headed?

6. How will the network measure progress and achievements (for example: comparative studies to past endeavors, post-event member surveys)?

7. What are the next steps that need to be taken in order achieve network goals (for example: planning committees can determine the specifics of implementation)?

8. What other information would be useful to members in the annual work plan (for example: organizational background information, data from previous years)?

Appendix

The following are excerpts of the annual work plans:

Michigan Green Communities 2014-2015 Work Plan		
Goal	**Strategies**	**Performance Metrics**
Increase geographic diversity in the state	• Assign advisory committee members to identify communities to call and outreach • Develop a new member packet to use for outreach	Add ten new member communities west and north of Lansing
Strengthen and broaden member participation to foster stronger connections between network members	• Pilot use of usdn.org with advisory committee members to encourage information sharing of network members • Provide one high quality and value packed multi-day event to increase face-to-face time of network members • Find ways to improve and incorporate member updates on monthly conference calls • Investigate ways to increase F-2-F opportunities, formal and informal	Improve response to "Get to know my Colleagues" question on survey annual survey • Add 20 network members to the USDN site • Increase number of participants on conference calls
Position MGC as the go to organization for local government sustainability in Michigan	• Increase MGC presence at other statewide conferences • Create content-specific resource teams and experts to serve as topic experts for communities undertaking new projects and programs • Create content-specific working groups to collaborate on projects	Identify 4 resources teams on topic areas determined by network members • Start 4 new content-specific working groups
Increase participation in the MGC Challenge to support local government leaders and track sustainability projects in the state	• Develop "challenge" grants to fund small, local sustainability projects	Add 10 communities to the Michigan Green Communities Challenge each year
Identify long-term strategic partners and financial support for the network	• Develop and submit funding/sponsorship proposals to potential funders, i.e. State, Foundations and other strategic partners • Create and implement annual work planning process with MGC Steering Committee	Maintain operating costs of the network

Southeast Sustainability Directors Network: 2014 Progress to Date

Since being founded by cities in Tennessee and North Carolina in 2012, we have grown in effectiveness and sophistication. **Please see the Appendix for our progress measurement, with metrics / accomplishments under each year's goals.**

Vision Statement:

SSDN strives to support members in their work, influence sustainable policies and programs at the local and state levels, and lead the advancement of national sustainability. This will be accomplished by:

- Closing the progress gaps between the Southeast and the rest of the nation;
- Leveraging the knowledge and experience of local government sustainability officials by being a member driven network to build regional capacity;

2014 Goals and Progress

1.) Foster Dynamic Engagement among Members
> Goal: Host third annual face to face meeting for members to build relationships and share knowledge. Member participation: 30 of 35 members. Member contributions: $1500
>> - Progress: Annual meeting scheduled November 5-7, 2014 in Orlando, FL.; 34 members registers with $6,100 committed from members.
> Goal: Create 5 southeast specific case studies to share our success with other cities
>> - Progress: Seeking support for case study development.
> Goal: Host quarterly webinars to convene members as voice of the south
>> - Progress: 4 calls completed. Average of 15 members per call.
>>> ° Carbon Disclosure Project for Cities Webinar- Information sharing
>>> ° Teleconference to provide President's Climate Task Force with resource feedback
>>>> ▪ Two SSDN cities (Knoxville, TN, and Miami, FL) serve on the President's Task Force
>>> ° Funders Network "How to Raise Local Sustainability Funding"
>>>> ▪ Julia Parzen (USDN), Ann Wallace and Jennifer Cummings (The Funders' Network)
>>> ° EPA Region 4: "Greenhouse Gas credits for Existing Power Plants"
>>>> ▪ Provided input on rules for GHG credits for power plants
> Goal: Conduct a trial of member small group discussion calls and evaluate member satisfaction with them
>> - Progress: The first three small group discussion calls were held on August 14, 2014.
> Goal: Highlight success stories and lessons learned from members through monthly newsletters
>> - Progress:

Metric	2013	2014
Subscribers	31	72
Average % of people opening email	50%	60%
Average % of people clicking at least one link in each newsletter	25%	30%