



2120 L Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037

T 202.822.8282
F 202.296.8834

HOBBSSTRAUS.COM

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GENERAL MEMORANDUM 10-034

Letters of Interest for Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program due April 9

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Program is now accepting letters of interest for its Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program (SGIA). The SGIA program is an annual, competitive solicitation open to state, local, regional, and tribal governments (and non-profits that have partnered with a governmental entity) that want to incorporate smart growth techniques into their future development. Selected entities receive free, customized, onsite technical assistance in creating long range, sustainable growth and community development plans. *The deadline for the letters of interest to be received by Kevin Nelson nelson.kevin@epa.gov is April 9, 2010 by 3 PM EST.*

About SGIA. The SGIA Program was created in 2005 in response to agency findings that many governments and communities want to foster economic growth while protecting environmental resources, but many lack the tools and resources to do so. The SGIA Program is specifically designed to help communities create plans to redevelop and revitalize brownfields or other infill sites in order to tackle development-related challenges. Once a community is selected for assistance, teams from the EPA make a multi-day site visit to better understand the community's needs and goals. Then, through a process of policy analysis (reviewing state and local codes, school siting guidelines, transportation policies, etc.) and community input, the EPA team creates a detailed final report and a road map which the community can use to implement its specifically tailored, long range, smart growth goals.

General Criteria. In order for an application to receive consideration, it must be demonstrated that the community:

- understands and supports the principles of smart growth
- is facing a specific, development-related challenge
- has a clearly defined project and a specific need for the EPA's planning assistance

Priority. Priority will be given to communities that can show local commitment through partnerships, such as local government staff time, support from local businesses, and other local resources. While there is no statutory requirement that a tribal government be among the entities selected, the EPA is strongly encouraging tribes to apply.

- More information may be found in the attached document and at:
http://www.epa.gov/dced/2010_0128_rfi.html
- Examples of successful SGIA planning projects may be found at:
http://www.epa.gov/dced/sgia_communities.htm
- Additional questions may be directed to Kevin Nelson at 202-566-2835 or
nelson.kevin@epa.gov

Please let us know if we may provide additional information or assistance regarding the matters reported on in this Memorandum.

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Inquiries may be directed to:
Dean Suagee (dsuagee@hobbsstrauss.com) or
Moriah O'Brien (mobrien@hobbsstrauss.com)

**Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program:
Smart Growth Principles, Program Criteria, Letter of Interest Guidelines**

I. Smart Growth Principles:

- Mix land uses.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

II. SGIA Program Criteria:

- The assistance must relate to policy analysis or public participatory processes that will improve the overall climate for brownfields redevelopment and revitalization of other infill sites. However, community-involvement activities associated with the cleanup, assessment, or inventory of individual brownfield sites are not eligible for funding under this RFA.
- The community understands and supports the principles of smart growth. Applicants should describe actions that the community has taken to address the location and design of development, regardless of whether they have been successful. EPA is looking for communities that have already learned about the principles of smart growth and now want implementation assistance.
- The community must be facing a clear, development-related challenge, whether it involves growth pressures, attracting more development, or planning for the future, and must identify opportunities for changing the way it handles growth.
- The community must have a specific, clearly defined project, and there must be a clear role for a team to assist with policy analysis or public participation.
- The community must be able to demonstrate how it anticipates using the results from the EPA-led team to implement changes locally.
- The community must form a diverse local team to work with the EPA-led expert team and to follow up on the technical assistance. The community itself must carry out the bulk of the work and must have the dedication and vision to succeed.
- Elected officials - mayors, county commissioners, city council members, state commissioners, etc. - must support this project and be committed to its success.

- Although this assistance will be free to the community, communities that can show local commitment through partnerships, such as local government staff time, support from local businesses, and other local resources, will have priority in the selection process.

III. SGIA Letter of Interest Guidelines:

EPA will evaluate letters of interest based on the criteria listed below. These letters should be detailed and clearly identify the challenge the applicant is facing and the specific activities that would be most helpful from the EPA-led team. Letters should be no more than two pages in a word processing document format with one inch margins, in no less than 10-point font. Submissions are to be kept to two pages – no supplemental materials or information will be read or considered. This letter will serve as an initial screen of projects. Approximately 15 percent of applicants will be asked to submit full applications, which will provide additional information to reviewers. This process will enable communities to be judicious with their time and help EPA decide from which projects to solicit additional information.

The letters need to include the following:

1. **Project Contact.** List name, title, phone, email, and address of the person who will be the main project contact. This person will be responsible for working with EPA staff to answer questions and provide additional information as the application process progresses. This person should have a comprehensive understanding of the content and work of the assistance.
2. **Description of the Smart Growth Challenge.** (3 to 4 paragraphs) As this program focuses on smart growth implementation, submitters need to have a well-developed understanding of smart growth and its implementation. Applicants need to demonstrate their understanding of smart growth through their description of their needs. In particular, we would like to know why this challenge exists, how it has been addressed in the past (if at all), and what you hope to accomplish by addressing this challenge. Submitters do not need to have the answers – that is the purpose of the assistance – but you must concisely describe the challenge and provide some insight as to why the EPA team should pursue this topic. Note: on page 3, we list topics of specific interest to EPA and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Challenges are not limited to this list, but these will give you a good idea of what type of issues we are particularly interested in exploring.
3. **Political Support and Implementation.** (1 paragraph) A key element of the success of this program is local support. Applicants need to identify persons and/or organizations that support the project and will work toward its implementation. For instance, applicants need to address whether this project is a priority to the mayor or elected officials. To this end, who is championing this work and who will find the resources to ensure that it is part of efforts to implement smart growth? Also, applicants need to describe their power or influence over the implementation of the solutions that will be generated.
4. **Role of EPA-led Sustainable Communities Partnership Team.** (2 paragraphs) The project scope can be refined once the project begins. However, we still require a brief, targeted description of the expected role of the EPA-led team. For instance, what will the national experts do -- will they hold a workshop, conduct research, analyze data, etc.?

How will the team's involvement help resolve the challenge? Clearly demonstrating your ideas here will provide our team with a sense of how you see the project progressing. This component is critical because it demonstrates how an applicant envisions the contribution of EPA and its team. When the role of team is described completely, there is a better chance that we will find the project idea compelling and worth investment.

5. **Replicability of the Project.** (1 to 2 paragraphs) The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program has a dual purpose. First, it aims to help the individual community solve a challenge or problem. Second, it helps EPA and our federal partners better understand a particular smart growth issue. Describe how the anticipated results of the project can inform EPA and its federal partners, as well as how the results could be replicated in other communities. Understandably, the expected results may not be known, but successful projects will have some sense of how this investment will benefit the submitter and other communities.

Letters of interest will be evaluated based on compliance with these instructions. A small group of applicants will be asked to submit a more formal and detailed application. Applicants will be asked to address a series of criteria regarding the project challenge, scope and potential applicability, among other elements. From that group, semifinalists will be designated. EPA and its federal partners will conduct conference calls with the semifinalists. These calls will be used to further evaluate how well the applicant meets the criteria. EPA will make final selections following the completion of the conference calls by late summer 2010.

Letters of interest must be submitted via email to [Kevin Nelson](mailto:nelson.kevin@epa.gov) (nelson.kevin@epa.gov) no later than Friday, **April 9, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.** Eastern Standard Time.