

Connecting People, Fostering Innovation: The Urban Sustainability Directors Network

USDN is a project of the Global Philanthropy Partnership.

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USDN | urban sustainability
directors network
Connecting People. Fostering Innovation.

THE URBAN SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORK

USDN is a peer-to-peer network of local government professionals from cities across the United States and Canada dedicated to creating a healthier environment, economic prosperity, and increased social equity.

USDN forges connections that foster innovative urban sustainability solutions.



MEMBERS

136 USDN Members Represent More than 73 Million People in the United States and Canada



NETWORK GOVERNANCE

USDN Activity Is Directed by Members



Michael Armstrong
Portland OR
Co-Chair



Katherine Gajewski
Philadelphia
Co-Chair



Barbara Buffaloe
Columbia



Jenita McGowan
Cleveland



Matt Naud
Ann Arbor



Sadhu Johnston
Vancouver



Nicole Woodman
Flagstaff



Peter Nierengarten
Fayetteville



Rob Phocas
Charlotte



Vicki Bennett
Salt Lake City



Zach Baumer
Austin

CORE VALUE: PEER EXCHANGE & LEARNING

Building Connectivity Among Member Sustainability Directors

Members learn from each other, push each other, and collaborate to advance big, bold ideas – even across vast distances:

- Sharing learnings & information
- Peer consultation
- Collaborative projects



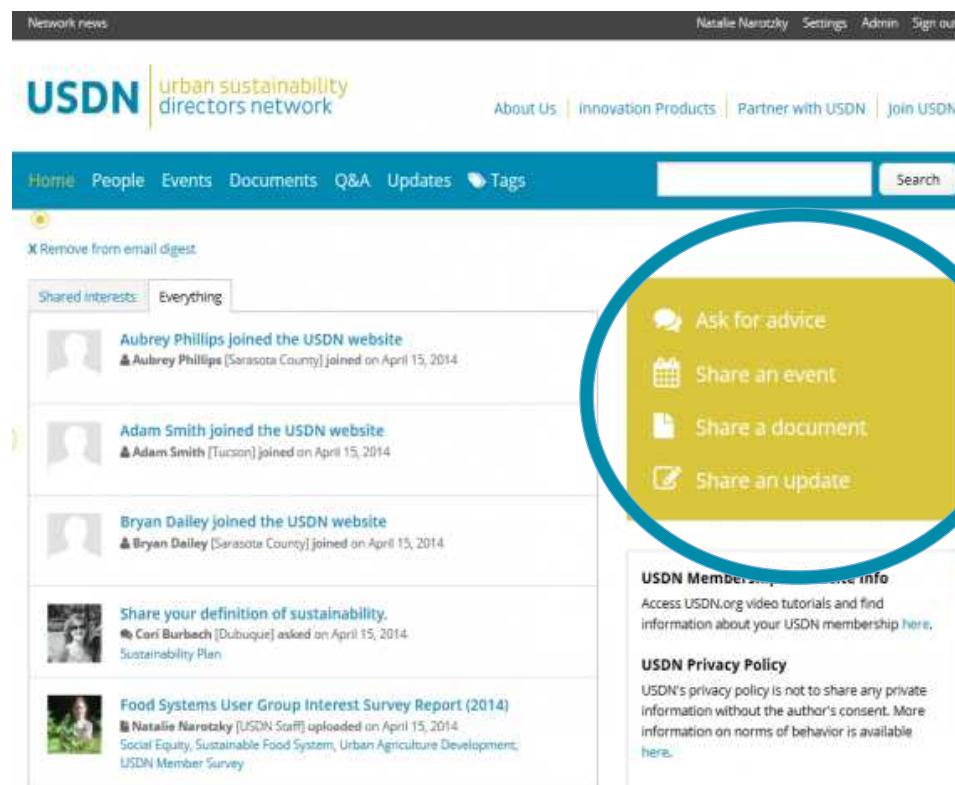
Photo credit: Jonathan Grevsen

PEER EXCHANGE AND LEARNING

Building Connectivity Among Member Sustainability Directors

USDN fosters peer exchange and learning through:

- Peer to Peer User Groups
- Annual Meeting
- USDN.org Members-Only Information-Sharing Website
- Weekly E-News
- Monthly All-Network Calls
- Small Group Discussion MarketPlace
- Member Surveys
- Innovation Fund Product Development and Dissemination
- Peer Learning Exchanges



The screenshot shows the USDN.org website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Network news', 'Natalie Narotsky', 'Settings', 'Admin', and 'Sign out'. The main header features the 'USDN' logo and the text 'urban sustainability directors network'. Below the header, there is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'Home', 'People', 'Events', 'Documents', 'Q&A', 'Updates', 'Tags', and a search bar. The main content area displays a list of 'Network news' items, each with a user profile picture, the user's name, and a brief description. The items listed are: 'Aubrey Phillips joined the USDN website' (Aubrey Phillips [Sarasota County] joined on April 15, 2014), 'Adam Smith joined the USDN website' (Adam Smith [Tucson] joined on April 15, 2014), 'Bryan Dailey joined the USDN website' (Bryan Dailey [Sarasota County] joined on April 15, 2014), 'Share your definition of sustainability.' (Cori Burbach [Dubuque] asked on April 15, 2014. Sustainability Plan), and 'Food Systems User Group Interest Survey Report (2014)' (Natalie Narotsky [USDN Staff] uploaded on April 15, 2014. Social Equity, Sustainable Food System, Urban Agriculture Development, USDN Member Survey). To the right of the news list, there is a sidebar with a blue circle highlighting four social sharing options: 'Ask for advice', 'Share an event', 'Share a document', and 'Share an update'. Below the sidebar, there are links for 'USDN Membership', 'USDN video info', and 'USDN Privacy Policy'.

PEER LEARNING GROUPS

91% of Members Participate in Peer-to-Peer User Groups / Discussions



- 1. Bike Sharing
- 2. Biodiversity
- 3. Building Energy Strategies
- 4. Carbon Neutral Cities
- 5. Civic Technology
- 6. Climate Change Preparedness
- 7. Climate Mitigation/Adaption Nexus
- 8. Creative Financing
- 9. District/Neighborhood Scale Sustainability
- 10. Electric Vehicles
- 11. Equity & Access
- 12. Food Systems
- 13. Green Infrastructure
- 14. LED Street Lighting
- 15. Professional Development
- 16. Small Cities
- 17. Smart Cities
- 18. Sustainable Behavior Change
- 19. Sustainable Consumption
- 20. Sustainable Economic Development
- 21. Sustainability Director Diversity
- 22. Sustainability Indicators
- 23. Urban Forestry
- 24. Urban Water Systems
- 25. Utility Data Access
- 26. Waste Diversion & Technologies

IDENTIFYING AND SHARING GREAT IDEAS



“The most inspirational meeting I went to all of last year was the Urban Sustainability Directors Network meeting. And I left wanting to move to Cleveland.”

Katharine Hayhoe, Texas Tech University

COLLABORATION TO DRIVE INNOVATION



- Members collaborate to identify opportunities for innovation.
- USDN provides a platform for cities to collectively share a “voice of the customer” to influence larger systems.

MEMBERS VALUE NETWORK COLLABORATION



IN 2014, USDN MEMBERS'
RELATIONSHIPS
HELPED THEM



save
time



find solutions
to challenges



save
money



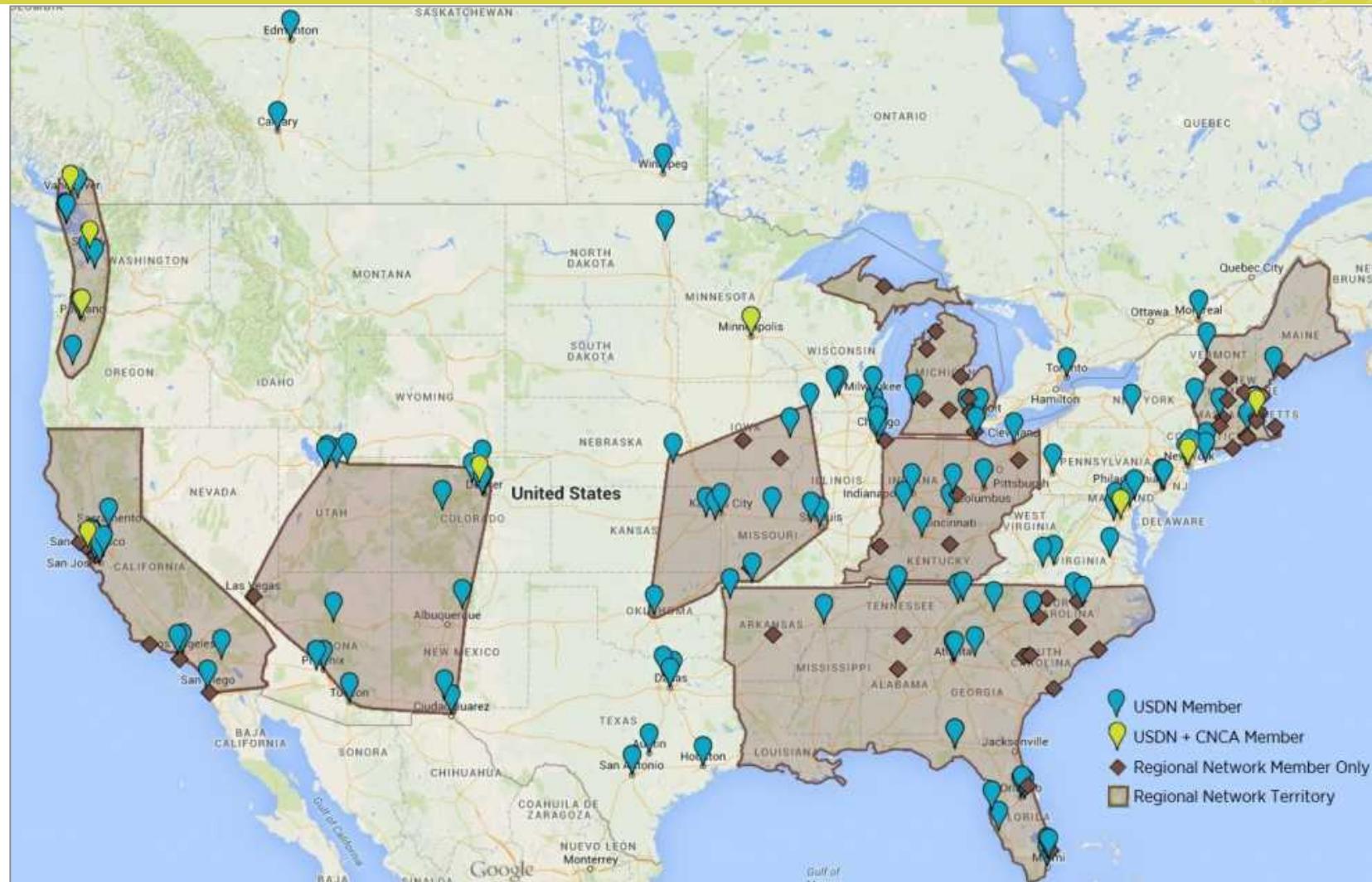
gain support
for policies



We do an annual "big ideas" process and always look at USDN resources for new ideas - we quickly get up to speed (knowing we can reach out as needed) and are able to iterate and tailor opportunities to our city.

Karen Weigert, City of Chicago

AFFILIATED REGIONAL NETWORKS

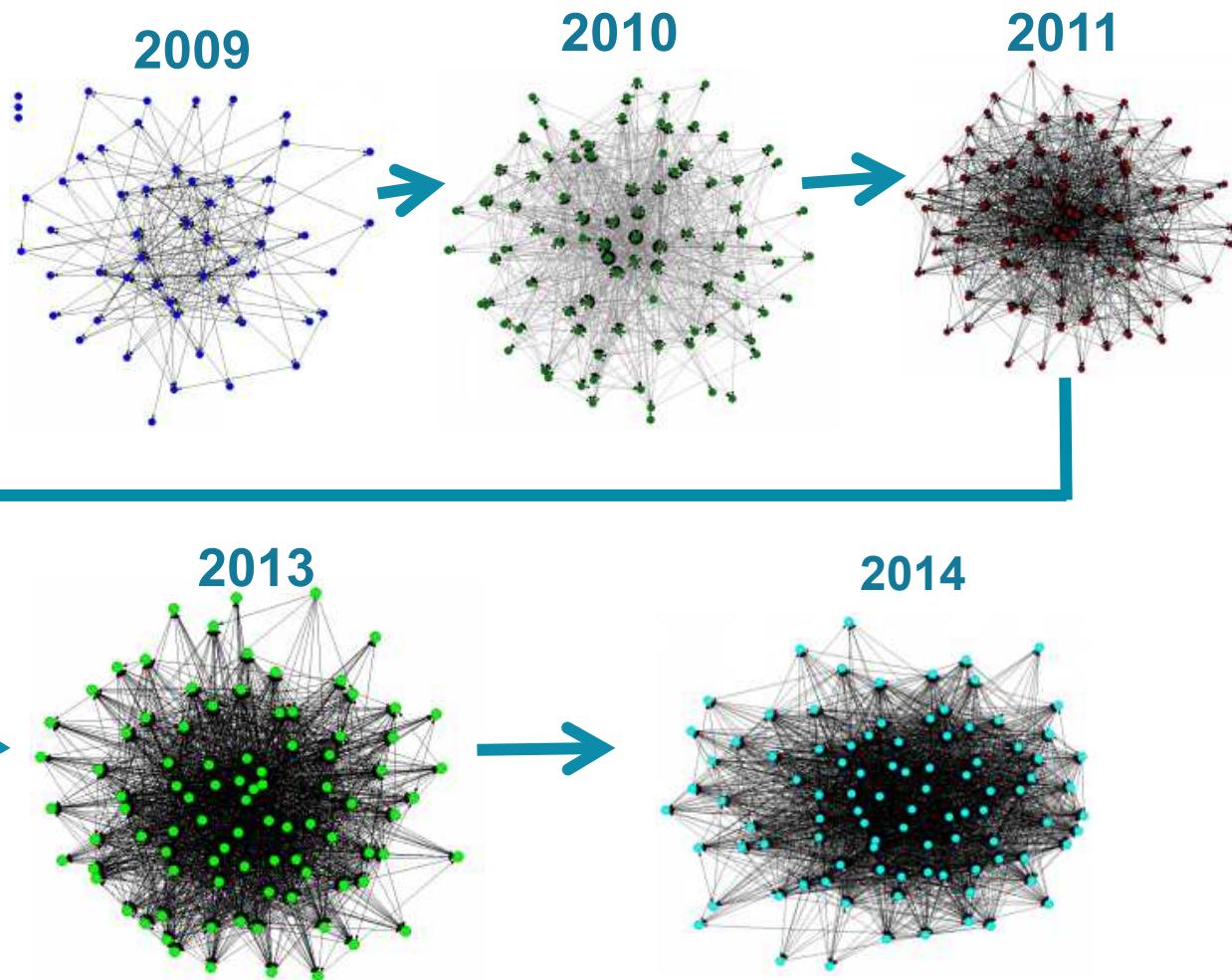


MEMBER CONNECTIONS



USDN generates an annual network map that shows the ties among members, including information exchange and collaborative projects.

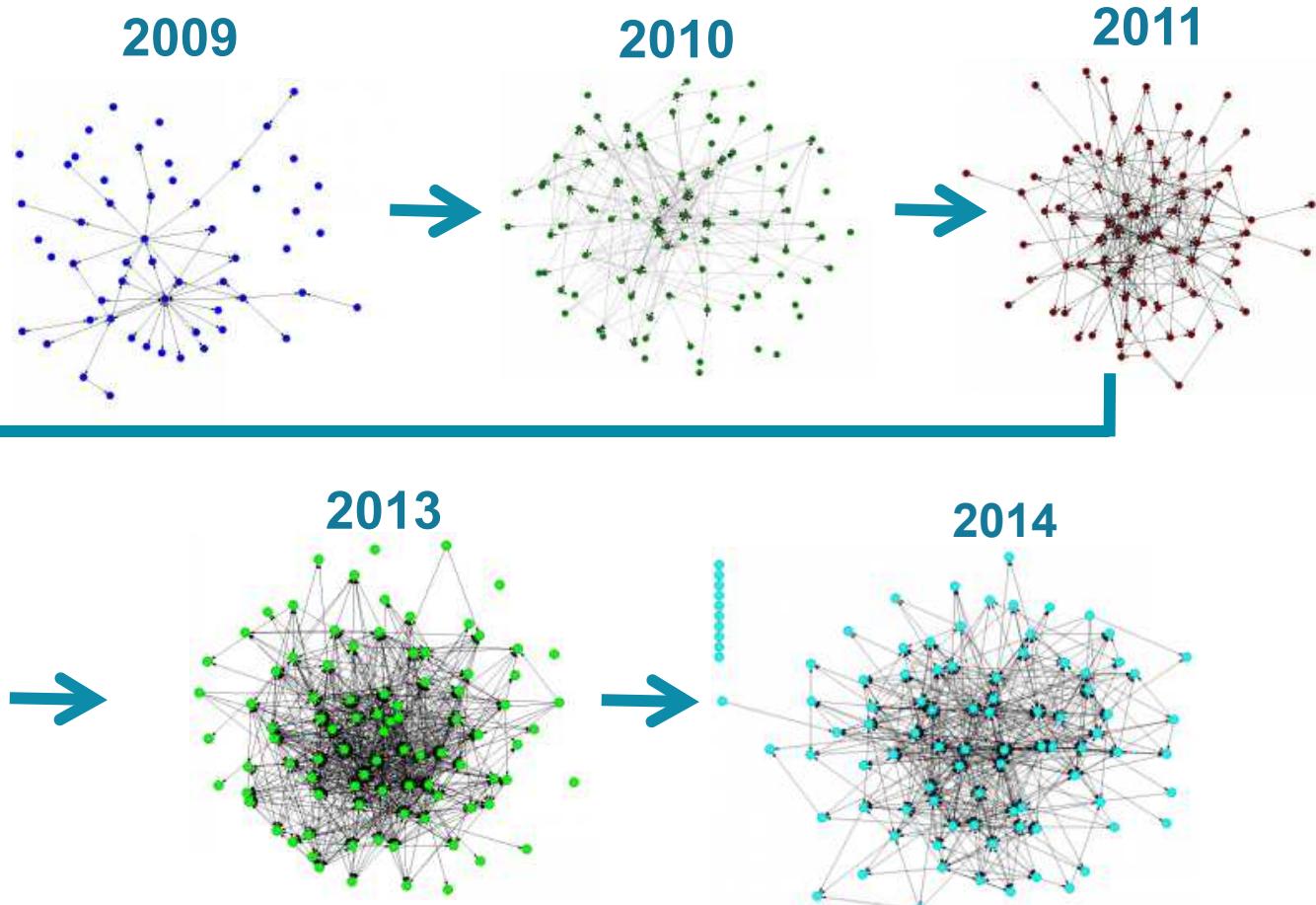
Year	Avg # Ties
2009	8
2010	19
2011	26
2012	31
2013	32.8
2014	38.8



MEMBER COLLABORATIONS

The following maps show the growth in information exchange and collaborative projects.

Year	Avg # ties
2009	1.2
2010	2.4
2011	4.5
2012	6.88
2013	10.29
2014	7.9



COLLABORATIVE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



waste systems



resident engagement



food systems

**6 MILLION
DOLLARS INVESTED
IMPROVING PROGRAMS**



climate preparedness



energy efficiency



transportation systems

PARTNERS FOR PLACES



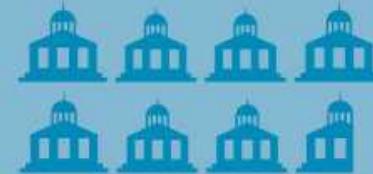
35 COMMUNITIES
PARTNERED WITH
35 FOUNDATIONS

INNOVATION FUND



67 COMMUNITIES
COLLABORATED ON
43 PUBLIC PRODUCTS

PEER LEARNING EXCHANGE



38 COMMUNITIES
CONVENED FOR
13 IN-PERSON MEETINGS

In part due to Burlington's participation in the convening, we are hiring an Innovation Officer – rather than an IT director, as the City had originally envisioned.

- Jennifer Green, City of Burlington VT

USDN INNOVATION FUND

Mission: To assist USDN members and their partners in collaborating to create, develop, test, and spread high-impact solutions for advancing urban sustainability.

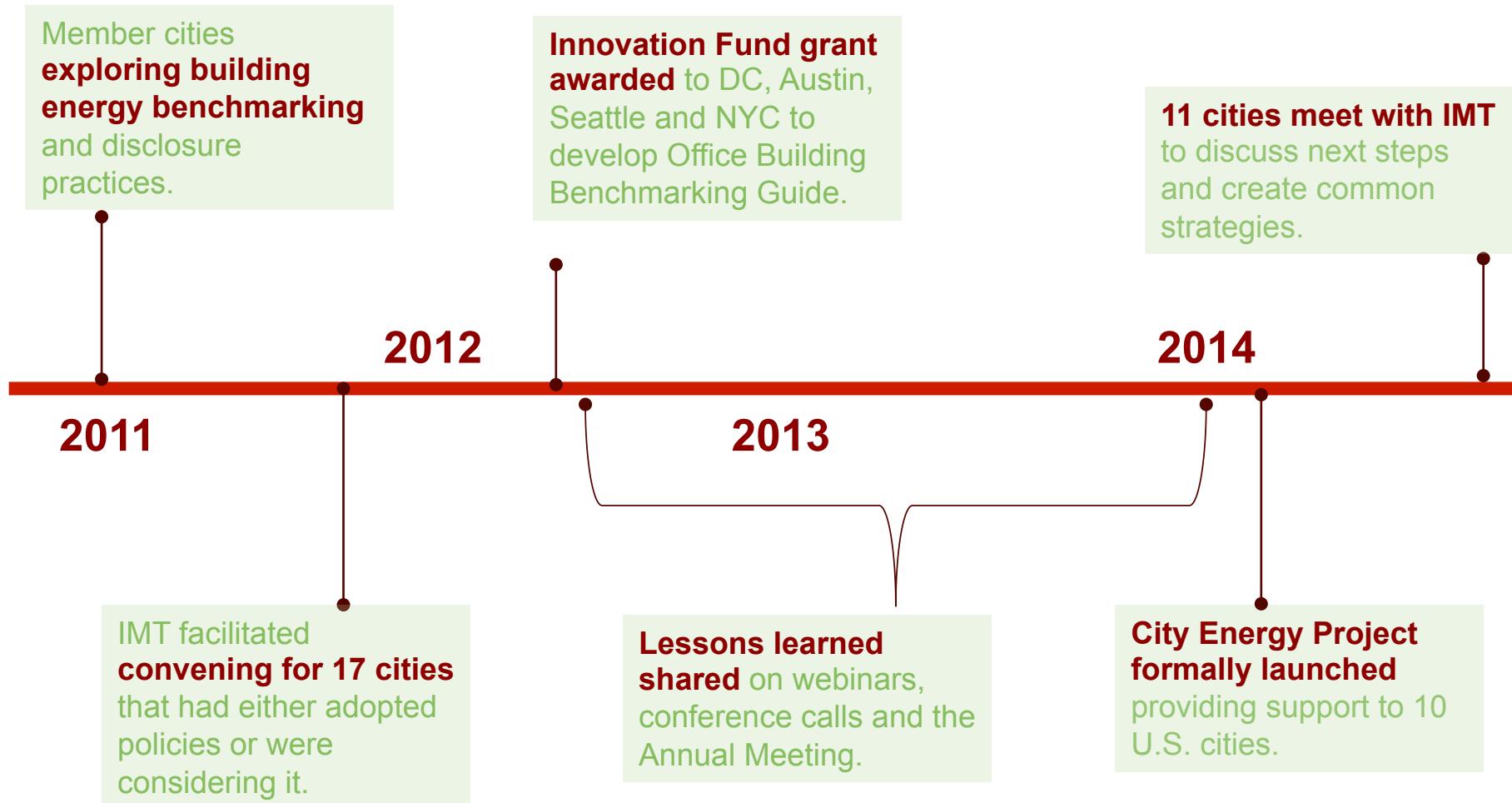
- An innovation involves the development and/or scaling of a **new way for local government to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity** in urban sustainability.
- An innovation could be a policy, practice, tool, program, performance standard, or organizational model.

Innovation Fund products:

<http://usdn.org/public/Innovation.html>



USDN INNOVATION FUND CASE STUDY: BUILDING ENERGY BENCHMARKING POLICIES



PARTNERS FOR PLACES

USDN partners with the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities and national foundations to support the Partners for Places grant program

- Catalyze partnerships between municipal or county-level sustainability directors and local, place-based foundations to advance important community-based sustainability initiatives
- Provide matching funds for partnership projects of \$25,000 to \$75,000
- A pathway for dissemination of sustainability innovations because it prioritizes USDN member innovation priorities



PEER LEARNING EXCHANGE GRANTS

The USDN Peer Learning Exchange program supports USDN members to meet in person with their peers to learn and share together about one or more practices, policies, or programs.

These pro-active, facilitated, deeper peer learning methods, include:

- Best Practice Dissemination
- Peer Review
- In-Depth Exchanges



TELLING THE STORY OF LOCAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



2015 USDN CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

- Peer Learning Climate Preparedness User Groups
- National Adaptation Forum
- Workshop on Collaborating with Community Organizations on Equity and Climate Preparedness
- Innovation Projects:
 - Translating climate data → decision making
 - Metrics for measuring progress on preparedness
 - Helpline for local governments
 - Training for municipal staff on climate preparedness
 - Models of addressing equity in preparedness
 - Communications & narrative

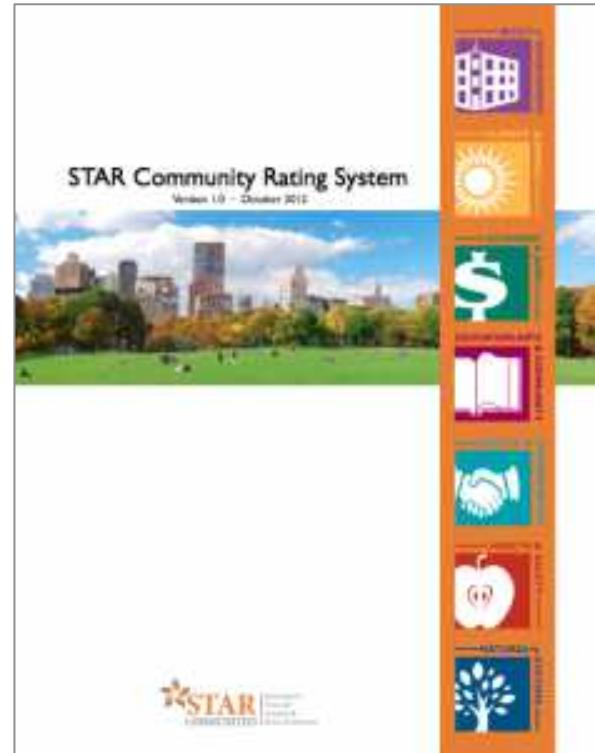
2015 USDN CARBON REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

- Most USDN members have GHG reduction goals, plans re: energy efficiency, renewables, transportation, materials & waste
- Some reporting significant progress (e.g., Portland, Toronto)
- Peer Learning Groups: Building Energy Strategies; Utility Data Access; Electric Vehicles; Urban Forestry; LED Lighting; Etc.
- Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (80x50)
- Leveraging the voice and perspective of cities to influence larger policies (e.g., COP21, Clean Power Plan)



FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

- A few dozen cities issue local 'sustainable city reports'
- Several frameworks exist
- Most commonly used framework for understanding, evaluating, and communicating about sustainability: STAR Community Rating System



STAR COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM

Guiding Principles:

- Think—and act—systemically
- Instill resiliency
- Foster innovation
- Redefine progress
- Live within means
- Cultivate collaboration
- Ensure equity
- Embrace diversity
- Inspire leadership
- Continuously improve

<http://www.starcommunities.org/rating-system/history/>

Table of STAR Goals and Objectives

Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Economy & Jobs	Education, Arts & Community	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Green Market Development	Community Cohesion	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health & Health System	Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Local Economy	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Environmental Justice	Emergency Prevention & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Historic Preservation	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Resource Efficient Buildings	Targeted Industry Development	Social & Cultural Diversity	Human Services	Indoor Air Quality	Water in the Environment
Public Spaces	Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure	Workforce Readiness		Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	Natural & Human Hazards	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	



Sustainable Action Map (SAM)

Action: Increase boot allowance for purchase of quality U.S. made boots Manageable Risks

Department: Public Works and AFSME Unit

Leadership Required



Value Delivered

Natural: How does this decision impact environmental health?

S: Boots are repairable - less boots in landfill.

Not imported - less fuel - used to transport - less pollution.

W:

O:

T:

Individual: How does this decision directly impact the well-being of citizens and employees?

S: Comfortable feet promotes quality work and safety.

W: Higher initial cost - benefits realized later.

O: Safety and health PPE and ergonomics lower sick days, fewer L&I claims.

T:

Community: How does this decision impact relationships, effective government, social justice, and overall livability?

S: Promotes an ethic of non-disposability.

Promotes safety and health.

Promotes skilled craft.

W:

O: Local repair shops will benefit.

T:

Economy: How does this decision impact the local economy and what are its costs, both now and over the long-term?

S: Many manufacturers in Northwest - White's, WESCO, Danner, Viberg, etc.

W: Higher initial cost - savings realized over a longer period of time.

O: Economic impact to local businesses, manufacturers, and repair persons.

T:



SWOT: S=Strengths W=Weaknesses O=Opportunities T=Threats

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS

- Leverage the networks, platforms, tools, and learning modes that practitioners already use
- Identify and target research gaps and felt needs
- Present ideas in multiple formats in collaboration with trusted advisors
- Foster a shared research agenda and cross-practitioner dialogue



Thank You!

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