



STAR COMMUNITY INDEX DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Conceptual Plan To Establish A National Sustainable Community Framework

OVERVIEW

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and the Center for American Progress (CAP) have established a partnership to develop the STAR Community Index, a framework for evaluating, quantifying, and improving the livability and sustainability of U.S. communities. The benchmarking and recognition tool is inspired by the success of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ developed by USGBC.

This paper presents a conceptual plan for establishing the STAR Community Index. The concept and development plan may be revised and developed in more detail under the direction of the Founding Partners, an Executive Committee and Steering Committee established in collaboration with the Program Director and development team.


Across the U.S. there is a marked increase in commitments from local governments to execute quantifiable actions toward sustainability and climate protection. Many local governments have already developed frameworks to help them improve and monitor performance, while others are seeking a framework that can be adapted to reflect local conditions. This rapidly growing interest is a direct result of both the urgency of addressing climate protection and other critical issues, and the demonstrated results by leadership jurisdictions that investments in sustainability strengthen local economies and create new jobs, improve the natural environment and restore habitat, and enhance the livability and quality of life for citizens.

For example, the Climate Prosperity Project¹ reports that Portland, Oregon has managed growth within an urban growth boundary by increasing the urban density, providing good access to public transit such as light rail, and investing in the revitalization of its' neighborhoods. Portland has not only met the Kyoto Targets of reducing emissions to 1990 levels, it has also increased jobs and median income, created mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, and generated \$2.5 billion in annual savings in transportation costs and commute and travel time for its citizens. And Portlanders' are reinvesting most of these savings within their local economy.

There is an urgent need to establish a national framework to assist local governments as they plan, measure and monitor progress toward sustainability over time. The STAR Community Index aims to

¹ Climate Prosperity Project, a project of Global Urban Development and Rockefeller Brothers Fund, www.climateprosperity.com





respond to this demand by becoming the nationally-recognized framework for local governments to ensure a level of rigor and integrity to the data, measurements and outputs they intend to achieve. Starting in 2009 / 2010, local governments will be able to use the STAR Community Index to plan, measure, and monitor the actions they are taking toward sustainability. It is intended to help local governments maximize their investments to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance environmental stewardship, generate more robust jobs and local commerce, create healthier communities, and improve the well-being of citizens and future generations.

The Rating System

The STAR Community Index will be developed as a national voluntary, consensus-based framework. To ensure the integrity of the system, the development process will include: 1) openness, balance, consensus and due process; 2) credits established with standardized methodology for measurement; and, 3) certification conducted through independent, third-party verification.

STAR will be developed by local governments and key organizations through a stakeholder engagement process, and work in collaboration with and support of existing local efforts. Volunteer committees will be established to lead the development of the framework, credits, methodologies for measurement, and requirements for achieving and maintaining a performance rating.

STAR is intended to serve as a rating system, not a ranking system. It will provide local governments with a framework to evaluate their own progress and recognize their achievements through a continuous improvement process. Standardization will enable opportunities for cross comparisons of communities with similar characteristics. Using technology, STAR resources will be developed to allow jurisdictions to learn from each other, encourage sharing of best practices and therefore hasten capacity building.

This rating system will be applicable to diverse localities and will recognize both objective performance and the degree of progress towards self-identified objectives. Local governments have the opportunity to “certify” their achievement through independent, third-party verification to ensure the integrity of the system. To serve as a relevant framework that measures continuous progress toward sustainability, municipalities may elect to publish an annual “Sustainability Performance Report.” STAR will collaborate with stakeholders to establish a cost-effective process to encourage its use as an annual reporting framework.

The rating system will be designed to evolve over time to allow for improvements in existing credits and metrics and to incorporate new credits and metrics that address emerging issues. The initial goal will be to update the rating system on a two-year cycle.

Credits and Measurement Methodologies

Both policy and performance-based metrics will be utilized in the rating system, as both have been demonstrated to drive change toward sustainability. Smaller communities may not have the same capacity as larger communities to gather and evaluate performance data, and thus the adoption and implementation of policies may enable these communities to significantly improve their performance toward specific criteria. However, the presence of policies does not always guarantee improved levels of performance so methodologies for measuring the successful implementation of policies will be established.

Jurisdictions will be rated by their achievement of a percentage of applicable points. Core issues of common relevance may be established as required credits in the STAR Community Index. Jurisdictions may also have the option to add additional credits and metrics based on local circumstances.

The framework, credits and measurement methodologies will be established by the Steering Committee and Technical Committees. Credits will cover a broad diversity of issues that jurisdictions are directly responsible for such as municipal operations and services to issues that jurisdictions have influence over such as economic development, environmental stewardship, livability and quality of life. While not comprehensive, below is a list of issues to serve as an example of what may be considered for the STAR Community Index:

Examples of Local Government Issues & Challenges

Built Environment	Community Health
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy	Arts, Culture and Heritage
Green Buildings, Neighborhoods and Infrastructure	Community Engagement
Land Use and Building Codes	Livability and Affordability
Solid Waste and Recycling	Economic Development of Green Technologies
Transportation	Local Commerce and Fair Trade
Urban Planning and Design	Public Health and Safety
Water Quality, Conservation and Wastewater Management	Social Services, Poverty and Homelessness
Natural Environment	Citizen Well-Being
Air Quality	Access to Health Care
Climate Protection	Healthy Living
Ecosystem Services	Income Equity and Green Collar Jobs
Environmental Management Systems	Local Food Security
Urban Forests, Urban Ecology and Habitat	Quality Public Education
Watershed Protection	Race and Social Equity

Benefits of a National Framework

The development and administration of sustainability frameworks requires investment by jurisdictions and partnering organization in both staffing and financial resources. In addition, established frameworks differ widely in both the credits and methodologies for measurement. For example, the Global City Indicators² researched a variety of sustainability frameworks developed for cities. They found that cities, on average, collect more than 100 indicators, and of the eight pilot cities for the Global City Indicators Project over 1,000 indicators were being collected with only three indicators common to all cities.

The STAR Community Index will:

- Reduce the administrative and financial burden of developing and administering local sustainability frameworks across the nation.

² Global City Indicators Preliminary Program Report (2008), prepared for The World Bank. Global City Indicators, www.cityindicators.org

- Allow municipalities to maximize their investments and staffing resources toward achieving strategic actions.
- Enable elected officials to measure, monitor and report their community's performance toward critical sustainability goals enhancing accountability to citizens.
- Engage a diversity of stakeholders through a consensus-based and transparent development process.
- Establish standardization in both credits and methodologies for measurement, while recognizing the need to address differences between jurisdictions such as size, region and capacity.
- Ensure integrity through independent, third-party verification of performance.
- Recognize the efforts and achievements made by local governments, and provide a framework to recognize improvements over time.
- Leverage technology to provide education and resources, facilitate sharing of best practices, and establish cost-effective, web-based reporting.

Role of Founding Partners

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Center for American Progress came together to initiate the development of the STAR Community Index in response to growing interest from their member organizations and the communities they serve. The Founding Partners will collaborate to co-lead the development and implementation of STAR and any subsequent updates. Founding Partners will establish program goals and objectives, produce a strategic development and implementation plan, raise funds to accomplish goals, and facilitate a stakeholder engagement process. Together, these organizations have committed more than \$450,000 over a two-year period to provide the initial financial and staffing resources needed to begin the STAR development process.

About the Founding Partners

The **Center for American Progress** is a think tank dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through ideas and action. We combine bold policy ideas with a modern communications platform to help shape the national debate, expose the hollowness of conservative governing philosophy, and challenge the media to cover the issues that truly matter. www.americanprogress.org

ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability is a membership association of local governments committed to advancing climate protection and sustainable development. Since its inception in 1990, ICLEI has grown to include nearly 1,000 cities in the world, more than 400 of which are in the United States. www.icleiusa.org

The **U.S. Green Building Council** is a non-profit organization committed to expanding sustainable building practices. USGBC is composed of more than 15,000 organizations from across the building industry that are working to advance structures that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work. www.usgbc.org

Program Management

The STAR Community Index will be a program of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and ICLEI is accountable for the overall success of the program. ICLEI will manage the development and implementation process, conduct an assessment of capacity needs, establish budget for review and approval, and lead efforts to secure funding. ICLEI will administer the program, develop marketing and communications materials, and manage the certification process. ICLEI will produce a business model to lead the program to financial sustainability following STAR development and implementation. ICLEI will

develop and deliver resources to support adoption of STAR by local governments, such as: online tools and resources that facilitate web-based performance documentation and reporting, peer-to-peer networking and sharing of best practices; STAR reference guide and technical materials; and, education curriculum and workshop modules.

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SUMMARY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

PHASE 1: PLANNING, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING

Program Planning & Research

Careful planning is a critical first step in the development of any new program or initiative. This document provides a draft summary of a project plan. The Founding Partners and key stakeholders will collaborate to more clearly define the project scope, including: goals and objectives; overall development strategy; key stakeholders and a stakeholder engagement process; deliverables and milestones; and, budget and schedule. An examination of these issues will be reflected in a “Draft Strategic Development Plan,” which will be presented to the STAR Steering Committee for review, refinement and approval.

Many local governments and organizations have already developed systems or frameworks to help improve and monitor community performance toward sustainability. The program team will conduct research to provide a comparative analysis of existing systems. The analysis will illustrate the similarities and differences between systems, identify commonalities between systems that highlight critical issues addressed by communities, and evaluate how issues are being measured by different jurisdictions. A “Comparative Analysis of Existing Sustainable Community Frameworks” will be produced and presented to the Steering Committee. The analysis will provide the basis from which to begin the dialogue to establish a standardized framework. A standardized framework will facilitate consistency, comparable collection performance data and sharing of best practices.

Task 1:	Draft Strategic Development Plan	Jul – Sep, 2008
Task 2:	Research Frameworks, Produce Comparative Report	Jul – Aug, 2008

Stakeholder Engagement

STAR is intended to provide a framework that will enable elected officials and public sector executives to measure and monitor sustainable community performance, maximize investments toward community goals, and enhance government accountability. To be credible, it is essential that STAR be developed by local governments and organizations that address the needs and interests of communities. The engagement process will be open, consensus-based and led by volunteer committees. The committee structure will include: 1) a Steering Committee to govern and provide direction and oversight; 2) Technical Committees will establish credits and measurement methodologies; and, 3) Corresponding Committees to allow opportunities for stakeholder comment and review.

Steering Committee & Executive Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of the Founding Partners and elected officials and executive staff from a diverse group of approximately 40 cities and counties, national associations, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. A majority of the Steering Committee members will be local government executives. The cities and counties will represent diversity in size, region, and progress toward sustainability.

Steering Committee Members

Local Government	Type	Founding Partners	Type
Albuquerque, NM	City	Center for American Progress	NGO
Asheville, NC	City	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability	NGO
Austin, TX	City	U.S. Green Building Council	NGO
Boston, MA	City		
Boulder, CO	City	Organization	Type
Chattanooga, TN	City	American Institute of Architects	Association
Chicago, IL	City	American Planning Association	Association
Cleveland, OH	City	International City/County Management Association	Association
Dallas, TX	City	National Association of Counties	Association
Denver, CO	City	National League of Cities	Association
Fayetteville, AR	City	Urban Land Institute	Association
Kansas City, MO	City	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	Federal Agency
New York, NY	City	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Federal Agency
Oakland, CA	City	Enterprise Community Partners	NGO
Olympia, WA	City	Florida Green Building Coalition	NGO
Portland, OR	City	Green For All	NGO
Santa Monica, CA	City	Local Government Commission	NGO
Seattle, WA	City	Natural Resources Defense Council	NGO
St. Louis, MO	City	Sierra Club	NGO
St. Petersburg, FL	City		
Washington, DC	City		
Arlington County, VA	County		
King County, WA	County		
Marin County, CA	County		
Miami-Dade County, FL	County		
Sarasota County, FL	County		
Westchester County, NY	County		

The Steering Committee will serve as the governing body to guide the development of STAR. The Steering Committee will establish project goals and objectives; provide strategic direction; approve strategic development plan and allocation of resources; create a set of principles to guide the selection credits; identify critical issues that must be addressed; and, oversee develop.

The Steering Committee shall establish an Executive Committee to preside over meetings, facilitate decision-making between Steering Committee meetings, and in emergencies make decisions on behalf of the Steering Committee. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Founding Partners and Committee Officers, including: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

The Steering Committee will meet initially during a two-day retreat with subsequent meetings held by means of telephone/web conferences at regular intervals determined by need. Steering Committee members may be assigned research and other related tasks to inform and support the development and implementation of STAR.

Task 1:	Formalize Steering Committee	Jun – Jul, 2008
Task 2:	Host Steering Committee Retreat	Sep, 2008
Task 3:	Develop Principles & Guiding Structure	Sep – Dec, 2008

Technical Committees

Technical Committees will be formed following the identification of critical issues to be addressed in STAR and development of an overall structure for the framework. The critical issues will inform the breadth of technical expertise needed, and the structure will provide an effective means to group credits into broad categories. The Technical Committees will establish the credits and measurement methodologies contained within STAR. Technical Committees will ensure technical rigor and scientific validity, and cost-effective measurements to evaluate performance.

The Founding Partners and Steering Committee will recommend content experts, drawn from both local governments and organizations, to serve as Technical Committees Chairs and will identify and recommend candidates to fill no more than 50% of Technical Committee seats. The remainder of the seats will be filled through election by Corresponding Committee members.

Task 1:	Establish Technical Committees	Sep – Dec, 2008
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Corresponding Committees

To maintain an open and transparent process, Corresponding Committees to the Technical Committees (and other committees as determined) will be established to provide opportunities for all interested parties to review the progress of STAR development and to submit questions and provide comments. A process for joining a Corresponding Committee will be established, and an outreach strategy will be implemented to reach a broad diversity of stakeholders.

Task 1:	Facilitate Corresponding Committee Participation	Oct 2008 – Ongoing
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Build Capacity

In response to the urgent demand for a national sustainable community framework, STAR will be developed on a very aggressive schedule. To be effective and successful in meeting the program goals and objectives, a substantial investment in people and systems will be needed to build organizational and programmatic capacity. An assessment of capacity needs will be conducted and a strategy for effectively and efficiently meeting the needs, including financial resources, organizational structure, staff requirements, systems and infrastructure will be developed.

Task 1: Conduct Assessment of Capacity Needs

Jun – Jul, 2008

Budget, Fundraising Strategy & Secure Funding

A preliminary assessment and budget estimate indicates that over \$3,000,000 will be needed to build the organizational and programmatic capacity needed to effectively develop and launch STAR, develop tools and resources, and support local jurisdictions with implementation. The budget will be refined following a more thorough assessment of capacity needs.

A fundraising strategy will be developed that will focus on two main strategies: sponsorships and grants from government agencies and foundations. Requests for sponsorship funding will be directed to key stakeholders, including: local jurisdictions, associations, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Task 1: Estimate Budget

Jun – Jul, 2008

Task 2: Develop Funding Strategy, Secure Funding

Jul 2008 – Ongoing

Build Staff Capacity

The assessment will also identify the specific skills and experience needed to support the development of STAR. For example, Technical Committees will require the support of staff with technical expertise. Dedicated staff will provide committee support, conduct research, produce meeting materials, and ensure progress to meet an aggressive development schedule. The assessment of staffing needs will include a staffing plan to ensure that critical milestones can be met.

Task 1: Staffing Assessment & Plan

Jul – Sep, 2008

Task 2: Sublease Flexible Office Space

Aug 2008

Task 3: Fill 5 Full-Time Staff Positions

Aug 2008 – Ongoing

Phase I Estimated Budget: June - December 2008

Staff Capacity & Overhead: 7 Full Time Employees by 12/31/08	\$ 215,000
Consultant Fees	\$ 73,000
Steering Committee Meetings	\$ 64,000
Technical Committee Meetings	\$ 7,000
Phase I: Total	\$ 359,000

PHASE 2: DEVELOP FRAMEWORK, TOOLS & RESOURCES, PUBLIC COMMENT

Develop Credits and Measurement Methodologies

Technical Committees will be responsible for establishing the credits and measurement methodologies or performance requirements. To facilitate the development process and meet an aggressive schedule, it is proposed that Technical Committees kick-off their work during an intensive, two-day retreat. This will provide the opportunity for members to meet in person and participate in a facilitated dialogue about critical issues they have been charged with addressing. Much like holding a design charrette, the goal of

the retreat is to build trust, establish collaborative working relationships, and accomplish a significant amount of foundational work in a compressed period of time. Following the initial retreat, Technical Committees will hold regular meetings by means of telephone/web conferences.

- Task 1: Host Technical Committee Retreats Jan 2009
- Task 2: Develop Credits & Measurement Methodologies Jan – Dec, 2009

Develop Tools & Resources

In preparation of launching the STAR Community Index, a number of tools and resources will be developed to support implementation. In addition to assisting local jurisdictions, these tools and resources will generate revenues. An overall business model will be developed to move STAR toward financial sustainability.

It is proposed to develop an online tool that will facilitate performance measurement and reporting. A technical manual or reference guide will be produced as a supporting document to STAR. The guide will provide greater detail on the credits and requirements and methodologies for measuring performance, as well as offering best practices and case studies and additional relevant resources. An educational program will be established to support staff charged with implementing STAR, and allow them to be more effective in implementing policies and strategies and measuring performance toward STAR metrics.

- Task 1: Develop Online Tools & Resources May – Oct, 2009
- Task 2: Produce STAR Reference Guide Jul – Oct, 2009
- Task 3: Develop Education Curriculum & Modules May – Oct, 2009

Stakeholder Review & Comment

The last element of the open, consensus-based process is to provide an opportunity for all interested stakeholders to review and provide comments prior to finalizing the STAR Community Index, and establishing a fair and open appeals process. A stakeholder review and comment period will be conducted upon completion of the draft framework and prior to formally launching STAR. All comments will be responded to in good faith. The stakeholder review and comment process is designed to strengthen the rigor and integrity of the framework and may lead to meaningful and substantive improvements.

- Task 1: Stakeholder Review & Comment, Revisions Nov – Dec, 2009

Phase II Estimated Budget: January – December 2009

Staff Capacity & Overhead: 12 Full Time Employees by 07/01/09	\$ 1,470,000
Consultant Fees	\$ 1,452,000
Steering Committee Meetings	\$ 67,000
Technical Committee Meetings	\$ 427,000
Phase II: Total	\$ 3,416,000

PHASE 3: PROGRAM LAUNCH & PILOT CITIES SUPPORT

STAR Launch

Maintaining a rigorous development schedule, STAR is targeted to be launched in January, 2010 as a complete program. The program will include the STAR framework, online tools and resources, resource guide, and education curriculum. These tools and resources will be designed to give local governments the knowledge needed to cost-effectively adopt and implement STAR to measure their community's progress toward sustainability.

The launch will be designed with a targeted marketing and communication campaign to raise awareness, demonstrate the benefits of STAR adoption, and highlight communities that are successfully implanting STAR and demonstrating improved performance. An online resource will facilitate peer-to-peer networking and sharing of best practices to create a movement of local governments committed to improving performance toward sustainability.

Task 1:	Official STAR Launch, Communications Campaign	Jan 2010
Task 2:	Support Adoption by Local Governments	Jan – May 2010

Phase III Estimated Budget: January – May 2010

Staff Capacity & Overhead: 14 Full Time Employees	\$ 653,000
Consultant Fees	\$ 89,000
Steering Committee Meetings	\$ 9,000
Technical Committee Meetings	\$ 10,000
Phase III: Total	\$ 761,000

TWO-YEAR Estimated Development & Deployment Budget: June 1, 2008 – May 31, 2010

Phase I: Planning, Engagement, Capacity Building	\$ 359,000
Phase II: Program Development	\$ 3,416,000
Phase III: Launch, Local Government Adoption	\$ 761,000
2-Year Total	\$ 4,536,000

STAR COMMUNITY INDEX DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

