

## Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund 2017 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Issued Thursday, April 20, 2017

***A Letter of Intent must be submitted by 5pm EST on Thursday, July 6, 2017***

***A Grant Proposal must be submitted by 5pm EST on Tuesday, September 5, 2017***

***Grant awards will be announced by 5pm EST on Friday, October 13, 2017***

***\*\*Proposals are to be no more than six pages, not including supporting documentation.\*\****

The Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund (SSCF) is a new funding opportunity for local communities in the southeastern United States. Grants will be awarded to local partnerships to advance local government policy, plans, or programs that will create equitable and sustainable energy and/or water initiatives. Grants are restricted to the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Applicants do not have to be members of the Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN); however, grantees are required to work with SSDN in a variety of outreach and educational areas. We anticipate the 2017 RFP will result in five to seven grants of approximately \$75,000 to \$150,000 per year for two years. Funding for Year Two is contingent on first-year performance.

For more information, visit the SSCF webpage ([www.southeastssdn.org/grants](http://www.southeastssdn.org/grants)), register for an informational webinar ([11:00 am EST on Thursday April 27, 2017](#) or [11:00 am Thursday June 22, 2017](#)), or contact Maggie Ullman, the SSCF Program Manager, at [maggie@southeastssdn.org](mailto:maggie@southeastssdn.org).

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## 1. Fund Background

The Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund (SSCF) is a partnership between [The Kendeda Fund](#) and the [Southeast Sustainability Directors Network](#) (SSDN). The Kendeda Fund supports the dignity of individuals and the sustainability of communities through investments in transformative leaders and ideas. SSDN is a membership network of sustainability officials representing more than 50 local government officials in the Southeastern U.S. SSDN members share ideas and collaborate to accelerate the adoption of sustainable best practices across the region. SSDN's mission is to build capacity for community sustainability in the Southeast.

## 2. Fund Purpose

Innovation toward sustainable and equitable outcomes often looks different in the Southeast than it does in other parts of the country. All too often, the greatest challenges are not determining *what* communities should do to be more sustainable, but navigating the uncharted path for *how* to implement strategies in a way that aligns with local values. SSDN members identified two drivers to advance sustainable practices:

1. Demonstrating proof-of-concept within the Southeast context: simply put, people on the ground need success stories from within the region to make the case for leadership support.
2. Providing access to implementation funding: Southeast communities are historically and chronically under-resourced. Local sustainability efforts need access to funding sources that acknowledge regional context.

The purpose of the Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund is to accelerate the adoption of sustainable best practices in Southeast communities by funding projects that implement local sustainability solutions, while leveraging the SSDN network to help others learn from grantee experiences and widely sharing success stories about sustainability in the Southeast.

The intent of this RFP is to fund five to seven projects that will support sustainable and equitable communities working in the following five areas:

1. Mitigating and/ or adapting to climate change through sustainable energy and/or water initiatives
2. Fostering equity and inclusiveness
3. Leveraging community partnerships
4. Strengthening local government policy
5. Demonstrating scalable solutions

Applicants should focus on these areas in their project design and application materials.

### 3. Funding Amount

The 2017 RFP will result in five to seven two-year grants that range from \$75,000 to \$150,000 per year. Grants will be issued in one-year increments, and Year Two funding will only be provided after the grantee demonstrates successful performance toward Year One project milestones. Grantees have two years to complete all milestones, deliver results, and spend all grant funds. Two-year funding will not exceed \$300,000.

### 4. Eligibility Requirements

Proposals that meet ALL of these eligibility requirements will be considered for funding and scored by the Selection Committee using the scoring criteria in this RFP:

#### Applicants

- **Southeast U.S. Community:** This funding opportunity is open to any Southeast community, including SSDN and non-SSDN members. For the purpose of this RFP, the Southeast includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Statewide or Southeast region-wide efforts are not eligible.
- **City or County Lead Applicant:** Projects must be led by a municipal Equity or Sustainability Director or someone who performs a cross-departmental equity or sustainability function in a local government. A lead applicant is expected to be highly involved in project leadership although they are not required to be the project manager or the funds recipient. In fact, applicants are encouraged to have a non-municipal partner perform fiscal responsibilities for the project. Although regional planning organizations, councils of governments, municipal utilities, and/or school districts are encouraged to be partners in a proposed project, they cannot serve as the lead applicant.

#### Projects

- **Project Timeline and Budget:** Projects have two years to complete all stated milestones, deliver results, and spend all grant funds. Project costs associated with this grant are not to exceed \$150,000 in either grant project year. Two-year funding will not exceed \$300,000.
- **Climate Change Mitigation or Adaptation through Sustainable Energy and/or Water Initiatives:** Projects must support local climate change mitigation or adaptation efforts. Proposals should detail the aspect of climate change mitigation and/or adaptation they intend to address (e.g. energy efficiency, renewable energy, water efficiency, green stormwater, etc.). Projects that seek funding solely for the design, purchase, or installation of sustainability measures are not eligible for grant funding. Design, purchase, or installation of individual sustainability measures may be funded when integrated into a larger project that meets all of the eligibility requirements (see examples of eligible projects below).
- **Equity and Inclusiveness:** Projects must benefit and engage people of color, people with low incomes, and/or people of immigrant and refugee communities. Proposals must identify the project's priority stakeholders, how they will be impacted by the project, and how they will be involved in shaping project design and implementation.

- **Community Partnership:** Projects must leverage community support through partnerships. Proposals must have at least one project partner in addition to the lead applicant. All partners must demonstrate their commitment to the partnership by detailing the role they will play and how the partnership will improve outcomes of the proposed project. Solidifying a project with partners takes time. This RFP provides three months to solidify the project partnership. The strength of the partnership and the leverage the partnership provides will be evaluated through the scoring criteria.
- **Local Government Policy, Plans, or Programs:** Projects must advance local government policies, plans, or programs, and proposals must clearly articulate how the project will go about advancing and supporting that local government policy, plan, or program. (This needs to be demonstrated by linking to or attaching documentation of the policy, plan, or program information). Examples include a climate action plan or neighborhood crime prevention program.
- **Project Match:** While a dollar match is not required, successful applicants will demonstrate significant in-kind and/or cash support. In-kind support can include personnel time donated to the project, as well as donated services, equipment, and materials. For example, if a utility offers cash rebates for installed measures, the value of the cash rebates are a cash match. If an organization will host a series of workshops in a low-income neighborhood, the value of the personnel time to organize and lead the workshops is an in-kind match. Applicants must document the value of their matching in-kind and/or cash resources.

#### Examples of Eligible Projects

- In support of a recently adopted municipal program to reduce negative stormwater impacts, a city applies for funding to forge a partnership with the impacted neighborhoods, the water utility, and a job training organization. Most of the community's residents are minorities and have lower incomes. The city will work with neighborhood associations and the job training partner to train and employ people from the community to install and maintain a variety of green infrastructure measures. SSCF funds will pay for development of the job training program and salaries for green infrastructure trainees. Matching funds will be provided by the city for the salary of the city sustainability planner and by the local water utility for the materials cost of the rain gardens as well as personnel who will quantify the impact of the project on stormwater flow rates and related problems.
- A county is partnering with a community health organization and a home weatherization agency to include indoor air quality and other health-related measures in the local weatherization program. SSCF is specifically funding the partnering organizations to develop a more health-related weatherization protocol, to train weatherization and other local personnel involved in energy programs, to conduct pre and post health assessments, to prepare a final report and presentation on the results, and to advocate for the transition to the new protocol. Matching funds will provide materials and labor for the weatherization activities as well as inclusion of the health-related measures in the retrofitted homes, for attendees' time at training programs, and for the salary of the sustainability director. A substantial percentage of the homeowners whose homes are being weatherized are people of color, as well as several of the local weatherization staff.

### **Non-Eligible Projects**

Projects that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be considered for funding. The Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund is not intended to fund traditional environmental programming such as recycling or solid waste management, brownfield remediation, or upgrades or maintenance of transportation infrastructure. Projects that seek funding solely for the design, purchase, or installation of sustainability measures on local government or nonprofit buildings are not eligible for grant funding. Examples of non-eligible projects include: lighting retrofits in municipal buildings or solar photovoltaics on municipal land.

SSCF will not reimburse any expenses for the preparation and submittal of a proposal. Our intent is to streamline the RFP process to minimize the time and resources required for submittal. SSCF discourages proposals that have elaborate graphics, videos, or other extraneous materials.

A lead agency may only submit one proposal. An organization may be a partner in multiple proposals, however, matching resources, whether in-kind or cash, must be unique to each proposal submitted.

## **5. Grant Selection and Scoring Criteria**

<b>Scoring Criteria</b> <i>(up to 120 available points)</i>	<b>Points</b>
1. <b>Make the Case:</b> How well does the proposal identify a need within the local context, propose a solution, and clearly state the expected outcomes in terms of impact?	5
2. <b>Project Design:</b> How clear is the project design? How clear and realistic are the budget, time frame, and milestones? Does the budget provide clarity on how the funds will be used?	10
3. <b>Metrics:</b> How well do the milestone metrics measure impact and not just actions taken? Can the milestones be measured within the time frame of the project?	10
4. <b>Community Sustainability:</b> How impactful will the proposed project outcomes be to mitigate or adapt to climate change by their use of sustainable energy and/or water initiatives?	20
5. <b>Equity and Inclusiveness:</b> What is the extent of meaningful involvement of priority stakeholders, including people of color, people with low incomes, and/or residents from immigrant or refugee communities, in shaping project design and implementation? Will the proposed project expand educational and economic opportunities for people with low income?	20
6. <b>Partnership:</b> How strong is the partnership? How well does it leverage community resources?	20
7. <b>Local Policy:</b> How well does this project advance and support an adopted local government policy, plan, or program?	20
8. <b>Regional Replicability:</b> How replicable and/or applicable is this problem and proposed solution to other communities in the region?	5
9. <b>Match:</b> How significantly does the match add to the project’s potential for success?	10

## 6. Application Guidelines

**Letter of Intent (LOI):** The required LOI template can be downloaded [here](#). A Letter of Intent is required to be considered for a grant award. The LOI should describe the proposed project (who, what, when, where, why, how, and how much) and include a list of participating partners. The purpose of the LOI is to improve the quality of the final applications, which will be due two months after the LOI. **LOIs are to be no longer than two pages, and should be uploaded electronically to [www.southeastsdn.org/grants](http://www.southeastsdn.org/grants) in Microsoft Word format (11-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins). The deadline to submit an LOI is 5:00 pm EST on Thursday, July 6, 2017.** If the program administrators have any questions or concerns about your LOI submission, the SSCF Program Manager will contact you by Friday, July 14, 2017.

**Grant Application:** The required Grant Application Template can be downloaded [here](#). The template enables applicants to be concise and specific with their responses. Please do not submit proposals with elaborate graphics and videos or with generic letters of support. Key partners may provide letters of support that clearly state their role and the in-kind or cash match they will be contributing. **Grant applications are to be no more than six pages, and should be uploaded electronically to [www.southeastsdn.org/grants](http://www.southeastsdn.org/grants) in Microsoft Word format (11-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins). Letters of support and budget documentation are considered attachments, and are not included in six page maximum. The deadline to submit a grant application is 5:00 pm EST on Tuesday, September 5, 2017.**

**Grant Budget:** The required Grant Budget Template can be downloaded [here](#). The budget needs to clearly delineate the major expenses and matching funds for each funding year. Typical major expense categories include personnel (by person), fringe, materials, supplies, communication, transportation, equipment, and indirect (overhead). Add or remove expense categories as needed. **Grant Budgets are to be uploaded electronically to [www.southeastsdn.org/grants](http://www.southeastsdn.org/grants) in Microsoft Excel format. The deadline to submit a grant application is 5:00 pm EST on Tuesday, September 5, 2017.**

## 7. Technical Assistance for Proposal Development

**Informational Webinars:** Two informational webinars about this RFP will be held during the application period. Participation is encouraged but is not mandatory. You must pre-register to participate in either of these webinars. Documents that summarize these calls will be posted after each call. Click here to register for one or both of the informational webinars: [Thursday, April 27, 2017 at 11:00 am EST](#) and [Thursday, June 22, 2017 at 11:00 am EST](#).

**Technical Assistance:** The SSCF Program Manager is available during the application period to respond to written questions, to review draft materials, and/or to schedule one-on-one calls with a proposal team. This is a new funding opportunity with no examples to draw from, so **applicants are highly encouraged to seek one-on-one technical assistance**. SSCF Program Manager Maggie Ullman can be reached at [maggie@southeastsdn.org](mailto:maggie@southeastsdn.org).

## 8. Detailed Timeline

There are two required submission dates for applicants. The first is the required Letter of Intent deadline on Thursday, July 6, 2017. The second is the complete Grant Application and Grant Budget deadline on Tuesday, September 5, 2017.

Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund Timeline	
<b>Application Period</b>	
Thursday, April 20, 2017	Issue RFP
Thursday, April 27, 2017 at 11:00 am EST	RFP Informational Webinar 1- <a href="#">Register here.</a>
Friday, May 5, 2017	SSDN Annual Meeting Informational Session
Thursday, June 22, 2017 at 11:00 am EST	RFP Informational Webinar 2- <a href="#">Register here.</a>
<b>Thursday, July 6, 2017 at 5:00 pm EST</b>	<b>REQUIRED DEADLINE to submit a Letter of Intent</b>
Friday, July 14, 2017	LOI Feedback from Program Manager
July - September 2017	Optional Technical Assistance for applicants
<b>Tuesday, September 5, 2017 at 5:00 pm EST</b>	<b>REQUIRED DEADLINE to submit a grant application</b>
<b>Grant Selection Period</b>	
Friday, October 13, 2017	Successful applicants notified
Thursday, November 30, 2017	Deadline to sign grant contracts
Monday, December 11, 2017	Public grant award announcement

## 9. Reporting Requirements

There are three types of reporting requirements for grantees:

### Storytelling

- Grantees will be required to capture and share with SSDN aspects of their project in ways that are relatable/instructive to the general public. Examples include written feature stories and participant profiles, photo essays, sound recordings, videos, and/or local media coverage. Storytelling submissions are required once each year of the project. These submissions do not need to be technical or expensive -- using a phone to capture photos or video could suffice. Capturing the first day of a program launch or filming 30-second interviews from a stakeholder focus group may be all it takes to translate the impact of your project to others in a more accessible way than a written grant report.

### Progress Reporting

- **Year One Milestone Performance Report.** In the final quarter of Year One, the grantee will submit to the Program Manager a written Year One progress report of no more than two pages that will document

progress on project milestones, performance, and budget, as well as Year Two funding needs and milestones. This will be the basis for a Year Two funding discussion call.

- **Year Two Funding Discussion Call.** The lead grantee (and key team members, if desired) will have a call with the Program Manager to discuss Year One milestone performance and Year Two funding needs after the Year One progress report is submitted.
- **Final Report.** At the end of the grant period, the grantee will submit a brief final report of no more than five pages to the Program Manager.

#### **Peer Learning**

- **SSDN Webinar or In-Person Meeting on Project Results and Lessons Learned.** The lead grantee will be asked to make a presentation about their project during a SSDN webinar or at an in-person meeting. The presentation will include project results, lessons learned, and key takeaways, etc. Travel expenses for this presentation will be covered separately from the grant funding.
- **Quarterly Peer Learning Progress Calls.** The lead grantee (and key team members, if desired) is required to participate in quarterly peer learning progress calls with their grantee cohort. The purpose of these calls is to share updates on progress, learn about each other's projects, and troubleshoot challenges together. Peer Learning Progress Calls will be scheduled after grants are awarded.

#### **Appendix**

These hyperlinks direct to each of required templates.

- [RFP Attachment 1: Letter of Intent Template](#)
- [RFP Attachment 2: Grant Application Template](#)
- [RFP Attachment 3: Grant Budget Template](#)