



SSCF Final Application Guidance

Thank you for submitting a Letter of Interest (LOI) for the Southeast Sustainable Communities Fund. We are excited to learn about your ideas to advance equitable sustainability in the southeast. To help guide you toward an eligible and successful final project idea, we have developed the following points for feedback. We have also shared the final application scoring criteria, so that you are aware of how your final application will be scored by the selection committee. Please review all of these points and reflect on how they can be incorporated into your final application.

Competitive and successful applications will address the fund's five main areas, will strongly connect with the fund's intent, and will meet all eligibility requirements.

Fund Purpose

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 five areas below. Applicants must focus on these areas in their project design and final application.

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

Key Areas of Feedback

After reviewing the LOI's, we have identified several common areas for improvement. In order for your proposal to ***eligible and competitive*** for this grant program, all final applications must address the following:

Lead Applicant: The lead applicant must be a Sustainability or Equity Director of a municipal government, or a local government representative that serves a cross departmental sustainability and/or equity role. If your lead applicant does not have the title of Sustainability or Equity Director, you must explain how your lead applicant plays a municipal cross departmental sustainability and/or equity role by providing examples of how they perform such duties. We received many LOI's that did not include a municipal sustainability director as their lead applicant and did not explain the lead applicant's cross departmental sustainability role. These applications will be deemed ineligible in the final application round.

Partnerships: You must demonstrate that you have at least one local community partner and explain the strategy for why they are the right partner to make this project successful. This partner must be located in and working in your local community. All partners must demonstrate their commitment to the project by detailing the role they will play and how the partnership will improve outcomes. In order to be competitive in the final application round, partnerships need to be solidified and roles detailed.



Inclusiveness and Equity: Projects must directly benefit and engage people of color, people with low incomes, and/or people of immigrant and refugee communities. Final applications must provide specific detail about priority stakeholders. Successful applications will share detailed information about priority stakeholder demographics, why they are interested in and in need of this project, how they will be engaged in the project, and which partners are helping the lead applicant successfully work with this stakeholder group. Successful applications will demonstrate how the project will involve these stakeholders at all project stages, and will show how the project will create meaningful opportunities for them. We received many LOIs that did not adequately address this area of the RFP, and we will be looking carefully at this area in the final application review.

Local Policy, Plan, or Program: Successful final applications will show support from the local elected leadership. You must demonstrate how this project helps advance a specific local policy, plan or program. In your final application, share with us how your project will be a lever to implement this local government approved and/or endorsed policy, plan or program. The more effectively you tie your project to a specific local policy, the more competitive your application will be. We received many LOIs that did not adequately address this area of the RFP. We will be looking carefully at this area in the final application review.

Planning Efforts: While we recognize that planning efforts are crucial first steps to creating successful projects, this fund is specifically focused on implementation and best practice adoption. If you are proposing a planning activity in your final application, you must prominently feature and describe in detail how this planning effort will be accompanied by implementation or adoption of best practices within the grant period.

Grant Selection and Scoring Criteria

Scoring Criteria <i>(up to 120 available points)</i>	Points
1. Make the Case: 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. Project Design: 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. Metrics: 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. Community Sustainability: 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. Equity and Inclusiveness: 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. Partnership: How strong is the partnership? How well does it leverage community resources?	20
7. Local Policy: How well does this project advance and support an adopted local government policy, plan, or program?	20
8. Regional Replicability: How replicable and/or applicable is this problem and proposed solution to other communities in the region?	5
9. Match: How significantly does the match add to the project’s potential for success?	10