2022
STRATEGIC PLAN
SSDN SOUTHEAST SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORK

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STRATEGIC PLAN CONTEXT

Founded in 2012, the Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN) currently consists of over 100 members (city, county, and tribal governments), including nearly 200 sustainability and resilience professionals from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. SSDN is a Partner Network of, and is fiscally sponsored by, the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), a network of nearly 300 local governments from across the United States and Canada. SSDN's members work to make their communities more resilient and sustainable.

SSDN's Commitment to a Member-Driven Network Model
SSDN operates as a member-driven network whereby our core values, mission, vision, and theory of change are developed by members and reflect members' needs. Members develop the network's goals, strategies, activities, and principles, which are rooted in equitable pathways to reach sustainability and resilience goals. In a member-driven process, we invite members to actively recognize their own privileges and to contribute to a space that is inclusive and respectful of the need for all to contribute. The success of all of SSDN's work is measured by membership engagement and collaboration that scales sustainability and resilience best practices beyond the local government to the region. The vision, mission, and theory of change guide SSDN:

Vision
Local governments are continually integrating and institutionalizing sustainability best practices throughout all towns, cities, and counties in the Southeastern United States.

Mission
SSDN exists to accelerate and scale implementation of local government sustainability best practices in the Southeastern United States through a member-led network of professionals who collaborate to solve problems, implement equitable solutions, and influence decision-makers.

Theory of Change
We believe that when networks of professionals are equipped with knowledge and skills and supported to collaboratively learn and experiment, then they can accelerate the field of practice toward scaled implementation and integration in all communities across the southeast.

Core Values
Our core values shape the work of our network, and guide our long-term vision and mission. These values also shape our members' work, and influence the way that they work in their communities. SSDN's Equity Committee defined the following Core Values in 2021, and they continue to support this Strategic Plan:

- **Collaboration**: Our members believe they can leverage greater change through collaboration that scales the individual work they do. Collaboration is also promoted through SSDN's member-driven processes that drive how the network operates and develops. Collaboration allows us to strengthen the network, our impact, and our communities.
- **Authentic Relationships**: We value authentic relationships that are predicated on shared experiences that develop trust, honesty, and integrity. Members' relationships are rooted in respect for each other's ideas and perspectives. SSDN believes that if members trust one another, they have the ability to work together more effectively and collaboratively.
- **Transformation**: We believe the Southeast can become a region that is equitable, sustainable, and resilient, but that this change will occur as a result of a transformational process. We believe that this transformation will require new and ongoing engagement of all community members, especially those that have often been excluded.
- **Diversity**: We value and encourage lifting up diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and knowledge among our members as they strengthen our network and the field. SSDN also values and

acknowledges the multicultural communities that our members serve and advocates for this diverse community expertise whenever possible.

- **Equity**: We recognize that racial and ethnic inequalities have been at the forefront of the inequities in the Southeast, and have been central to the way our region has developed. Therefore, we put these inequities at the forefront of our work, and by doing so, we work to ensure all people have genuine opportunities to thrive.
- **Inclusion**: Our member-driven network creates an inclusive environment and celebrates multiple approaches and points of view. We seek opportunities to provide access to those with limited resources, traditionally oppressed people, and people of color. All SSDN members are included in the network's strategy and program development, activities, and improvement.

STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS

SSDN's Strategic Pillars

Grow the Field

SSDN supports the next generation of climate leadership in local government, and a diverse set of communities commits to implementing equitable, sustainable solutions.

Build Member Capacity

Local government sustainability leaders have the capacity to implement equitable sustainability practices in their communities.

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Address Systemic Barriers

Use SSDN's trusted relationships, member alignment, and collaboration to address some of the region's most challenging systemic barriers.

Grow & Sustain Organizational Capacity

The organization and structure meets member needs and facilitates sustainable growth and organizational security over a five-year period.

Maintain a Strong, Trusted, and Connected Network

SSDN's Foundational Pillar:

SSDN maintains and supports close connections amongst members and facilitates a trusted environment around which all of SSDN's strategic goals are built and implemented.

STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES

1) Maintain a Strong, Connected, and Trusted Regional Network	Maintain close connections between members that facilitate a climate of trust, and facilitate peer learning and growth in the Southeast.
Strategies	1. Provide multiple opportunities and avenues for members to connect with each other, meet new members, and grow trusted relationships. 2. Strengthen member to member communications tools and activities.

2) Grow the Field	**SSDN supports the next generation of climate leadership in local government, and a diverse set of communities commits to implementing equitable sustainable solutions.**
Strategies	1. **Develop and improve distinct membership offerings to support those new to the field (i.e. small and rural communities)** 2. **Expand partnerships to support growth of an equitable sustainability field and support a changing membership dynamic at SSDN;** 3. **Strengthen communications and public relations at SSDN; and** 4. **Provide more resources and support for members related to funding and resources opportunities to support their work**
3) Build Member Capacity	**Local government sustainability leaders have the capacity to implement equitable sustainability practices in their communities.**

Strategies	1. **Improve access to knowledge and resources related to regional and national best practices;**
	2. **Sustain, grow, and refine SSDN's 3 core capacity building program:**
	    a. **Southeast Sustainable Recovery Center;**
	    b. **Policy Program;**
	    c. **Peer Learning Program**
	3. **Where funding is available, provide technical support on priority issues to members facilitated via partnerships and/or cohort models;**
	4. **Pursue funding for SSDN to facilitate adding staff support to members; and**
	5. **Establish a robust New Communities Program for those new to the field.**

4) Address Systemic & Cultural Barriers to Equitable Climate Action	**Use SSDN's trusted relationships, member alignment, and collaboration to address some of the region's most challenging systemic barriers.**
Strategies	1. **Integrate equity concepts, principles, and frameworks into all of SSDN's member-facing and internal work;** 2. **Strengthen external partnerships to support systemic and cultural barrier understanding and opportunities;** 3. **Build out a robust Policy Program in ways that support member needs and breakdown systemic policy barriers; and** 4. **Strengthen data and metrics tracking for policy and equity impacts.**
5) Grow and Sustain SSDN's Organizational Capacity	**Build an organizational structure that meets member needs and facilitates sustainable growth and organizational security over a five-year period.**
Strategies	1. **Determine the appropriate path forward for SSDN as an organization, and establish USDN relationship recommendations;** 2. **Expand and right-size fundraising capacity;** 3. **Sustain and support SSDN staffing for long-term success and member support;** 4. **Develop a robust communications strategy and platform; and** 5. **Develop and improve network-wide metrics and evaluation for tracking progress.**