

A Sustainable Rhode Island Three-Year Work Plan 2012 - 2015



HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant
Fiscal Agent: Rhode Island Division of Planning

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Introduction

Over the past several years, Rhode Island has engaged in significant regional planning exercises to update and link key elements of the State Guide Plan. The first of these efforts was *Land Use 2025*, the State's plan for conservation and development completed in 2006. This plan challenges all Rhode Islanders to work collectively to design, build and conserve the State's communities and landscapes. This plan acts as a major connective State Guide Plan element in Rhode Island's planning and development system and will serve as the basis for Rhode Island's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD), along with the State's Long Range Transportation Plan, *Transportation 2030* and the recently completed drinking water supply plan, *RI Water 2030*.

Land Use 2025 lays out a vision for Rhode Island as a unique and special place, retaining its distinctive landscape, history, traditions and natural beauty, while growing to meet its residents' needs for a thriving economy and vibrant, affordable places to live. Further, the State will have contained sprawling housing and commerce, and social interaction will be concentrated in dense centers of varying scales, marked by quality design. Greater Providence will be the region's premier center for people and culture. Other cities, towns and villages will be lively sub-centers, connected by efficient transportation and service networks. A forested band in the western third of the state will conserve essential resources and support resource-based economies. Farmland and forest will surround centers that are infused with greenways and open space. Narragansett Bay will be healthy and productive. The waterfront edge will remain the state's trademark, carefully managed to sustain its uses while preserving its natural qualities. Rhode Island will balance the needs of its people with the protection of its natural resources. It will be a place where all generations may enjoy natural beauty, clean air and water, a productive economy, an affordable place to live, access to efficient transportation systems, a connection to the past and a sustainable, prosperous future.

Rhode Island holds a unique identity with a strong distinction between its historic urban centers and the more rural surrounding areas. Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution, Rhode Island has a history stretching back at least to the 1860s of dense residential development surrounding mills and other industrial uses, both in urban and rural areas. This historic development pattern in Rhode Island has led to population and housing densities that are the fourth-highest in the country with 75 percent of the population within a 40-mile long urban/suburban corridor concentrated along the coast of Narragansett Bay and in traditional, compact villages in more rural areas, leaving 60 percent of the state's land area forested. This densely populated corridor contains virtually all of the state's public infrastructure, major transportation routes and institutional and cultural centers.

This historical pattern of development began to shift dramatically beginning in the 1940's as a net emigration from cities to suburbs took place. A striking perspective illustrating the extent of this development was noted in *The Costs of Suburban Sprawl and Urban Decay in Rhode Island*:

Rhode Island developed more residential, commercial, and industrial land in the last 34 years than in its first 325 years. Only 65,000 acres of residential, commercial, and industrial land was developed between 1636 and 1961, but 1½ times that amount—96,000 acres—was developed between 1961 and 1995.

It took over 300 years to develop the first 20 percent of the state's land, and only 25 more years (1970-1995) to develop another nine (9) percent. During this period, development increased

nearly nine (9) times faster than the population grew, as people and businesses moved to the rural and suburban parts of the state, creating sprawl and increasing demand for new and improved infrastructure. The state's suburban communities gained 56,000 jobs, while the cities lost 10,000 jobs.

This pattern of low-density, large-lot, single-use and scattered sprawl development unnecessarily consumes vast natural resources, requires redundant taxpayer investments in facilities and infrastructure and is not sustainable. *Land Use 2025* established an Urban Services Boundary (USB) that covers areas of the state with existing infrastructure resources and traditional population centers. It also built on the concept of growth centers – areas within and outside the USB that can be the target of denser development at rural, suburban and urban scales. The essential land-use question for Rhode Island is whether to continue to sprawl, or return to a more efficient pattern of land use in the USB and growth centers, inspired by traditional modes of development that have served the state well for over 300 years.

Program Summary

The Rhode Island Division of Planning and its partners will develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) for the State of Rhode Island through the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant (SCRPG). The SCRPG will support a program of key activities to advance sustainability and equity in the region, summarized below:

1. Address the subject matter gaps related to housing and economic development in Rhode Island's State Guide Plan and demonstrate that several substantially linked elements of that Plan constitute a RPSD as outlined by HUD.
2. Using the Livability Principles as evaluation criteria, synthesize the goals, strategies and actions contained in the Land Use, Transportation, Water Supply, Economic Development and Housing State Guide Plan Elements into an integrated RPSD and implementation program outlining specific steps that will move the region from planning to action;
3. Identify and delineate specific geographic areas within the State that are most suitable for infill and development including those areas with adequate drinking water supplies and appropriate for infrastructure investment;
4. Build capacity within state and local government and among participants in the planning process by increasing skills and technical expertise in sustainable development;
 - 5a. Utilize a public participation strategy to reach target populations, engage them in the planning process and ensure sustained participation throughout implementation of the RPSD;
 - 5b. Establish a Social Equity Advisory Committee (SEAC) to represent underserved populations in the state and ensure social equity is infused in all plans;
 - 5c. Develop an overall communication strategy for sharing data, publicizing project events, activities and outcomes and sharing lessons learned in drafting the State's RPSD; and
6. Develop meaningful performance measures that are easily tracked and correspond with HUD's eight mandatory outcomes of a RPSD.

Land Use 2025, Transportation 2030 and RI Water 2030, augmented by additional planning and analysis to fill current gaps in housing, economic development and social equity, make up the overarching framework of the RPSD. The RPSD will also include a detailed implementation program with specific strategies that can be undertaken to create a more sustainable future for the State. Another major step forward in achieving sustainable development patterns is proactively working with municipalities, quasi-state agencies, water suppliers and others to identify areas best suited for infrastructure investment and more concentrated development. The identification of these specific areas as village or growth centers will guide the State's limited resources towards investments that will have the greatest impact. A key component of the work program is to ensure that capacity is built within state and municipal governments and among participants in the planning process by increasing skills and technical expertise and emphasizing the sharing of resources and knowledge for maximum efficiency. The experience gained through these efforts will fuel protocols, tools and platforms that will, in turn, facilitate future planning efforts. Policy changes based on RPSD recommendations will create incentives and remove barriers to sustainable and equitable decisions at the local level. Performance measurement will allow the Consortium to evaluate which efforts are most successful, information that can be used to modify future efforts for maximum effectiveness. This will all build on the state's existing network of community-based and non-profit organizations to create sustainable, equitable communities coordinated with allied regional initiatives planned or already underway.

Decision-Making Process

The grant Consortium consists of 19 member organizations that were chosen based on area of expertise, geographic diversity and interest in participating in the RPSD process. The lead member is the Rhode Island Division of Planning, representing the State Planning Council, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region. There are six (6) additional state and quasi-state agencies in the Consortium including Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and Rhode Island Department of Health.

The Consortium contains nine (9) municipalities, comprising 52% of the State's population. These municipalities are the Cities of Providence, Warwick, Pawtucket, Cranston, East Providence and Newport and the Towns of North Kingstown, Westerly and Burrillville.

The Consortium also includes three (3) non-profit organizations, the Rhode Island Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Grow Smart Rhode Island and Rhode Island Legal Services, who have the capacity to engage a diverse representation of the general population and have the proven ability to work with units of local government and the MPO to advance sustainability in Rhode Island.

Voting members of the Consortium will consist of one representative from each of the 19 member organizations. The Consortium will meet monthly (at least while the grant logistics are finalized, at which point it may begin to meet bi-monthly or quarterly), and voting members will serve for the duration of the SCRPG and have responsibilities that include:

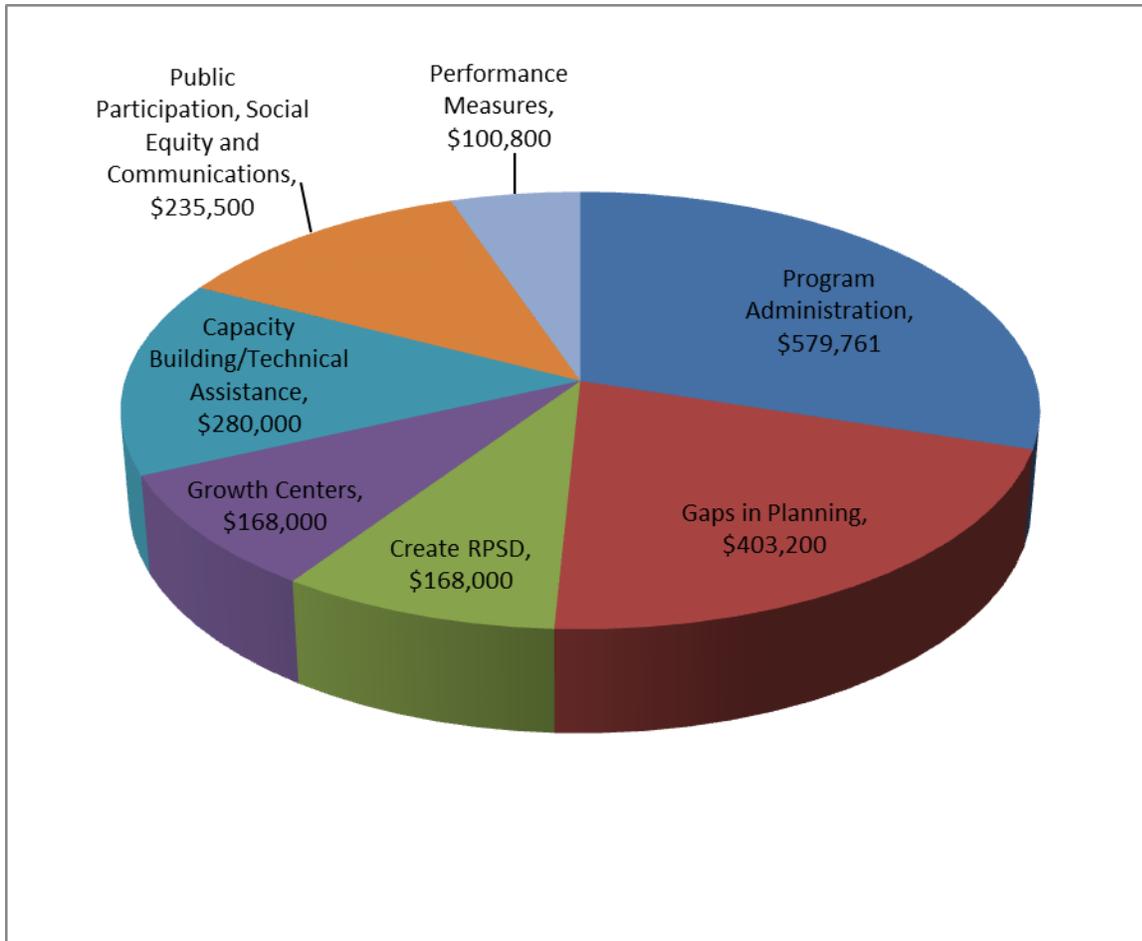
- Setting an overall vision and project goals for the planning process
- Prioritizing program activities and approving budgets and work plans
- Selecting sub-grantees
- Reviewing and approving the public engagement plan, actively communicating the work of the consortium and soliciting input within their offices and constituencies.
- Deliberating on critical policy recommendations that emerge from the project and advising the State Planning Council on these policy recommendations.
- Coordinating program activities with the many other allied regional and local initiatives underway.

In order to address these responsibilities efficiently and fairly, an initial task of the Consortium will be to develop criteria and a process for decision making that avoids real and perceived conflicts of interest.

Major program or policy decisions will be brought to the Consortium in their regular meetings, providing for integrated review by the participants. Day-to-day management in executing the decisions of the Consortium and the program work plan will be reserved for the Rhode Island Division of Planning Associate Director and his designees.

Budget Allocation

Initial allocation of the \$1.9+ million SCRPG, across the six key program activities and program administration for the 3 years of the grant, can be seen in the chart below.



Glossary of Organization Acronyms

DEM	RI Department of Environmental Management
DOH	RI Department of Health
EDC	RI Economic Development Corporation
GSRI	Grow Smart Rhode Island
OHCD	RI Office of Housing & Community Development
RIDOT	RI Department of Transportation
RIH	Rhode Island Housing
RILISC	Rhode Island Local Initiatives Support Corporation
RILS	Rhode Island Legal Services
RIPTA	RI Public Transit Authority
SEAC	Social Equity Advisory Committee
SPP	Statewide Planning Program

Work Plan

The six key program activities are described below. The detail reflects our best estimate of what will be needed to accomplish the goals and objectives. Many activities will occur concurrently and/or iteratively, and may change as program demands or budget require. All tasks will be shaped by a work plan and budget for each year of the program, ensuring that the lessons of the previous year are taken into account.

I. ADDRESSING GAPS IN THE REGIONAL PLAN

Despite the comprehensiveness of *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030*, both contain gaps that must be filled to complete the necessary framework for fully integrated regional planning. Priority efforts in this area are listed below. In addition, the Statewide Planning Program will also support periodic updates to the plan's goals, objectives and recommendations, as well as updated communication materials necessary to engage a broad cross-section of the region's population.

A. Review *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030*

The Division of Planning will hire a new Supervising Planner and Principal Planner for the duration of this grant. These new planners will be working on implementation reports for both *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030*. These reports will review each strategy to assess the progress that has been made toward implementation and will identify any barriers that have impeded implementation efforts. As part of the RPSD development process, we will propose amendments to these components to ensure that they are coordinated with the recently completed *RI Water 2030*, and with the Housing and Economic Development components. In addition, barriers to implementation that are identified will be addressed to ensure that progress continues. As outlined below, a Social Equity Advisory Committee (SEAC) will also audit these documents to identify social equity gaps and propose amendments to address those gaps.

Timeline: June 2012 through February 2014

Goal: Ensure that existing land use and transportation plans are primed to serve as an up-to-date backbone for the RPSD.

Objectives:

- Fully coordinate *Land Use 2025*, *Transportation 2030* and *RI Water 2030* with other components of the RPSD.
- Analyze and address persistent and forthcoming barriers to implementation of plan goals and strategies.
- Ensure that both plans meet or exceed the recommendations of the SEAC.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Identify staff to review and update plans for review and approval by the State Planning Council, and serve as liaisons to any committees working on the Housing and Economic Development plans and Social Equity. (SPP, RIDOT, RIPTA)
- Staff will make any needed updates to the existing plans for review and approval by the State Planning Council based on outcomes of new plans developed through the SCRPG and recommendations of the SEAC. (SPP, RIDOT, RIPTA)

- Identify barriers to implementation of existing plans and make recommendations to overcome them. (SPP, RIDOT, RIPTA, Consortium)

Products/Outcomes:

- Document outlining proposed changes to *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030*.
- Amendments to *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030* for review and approval by the State Planning Council.
- Incorporate amendments into RPSD.

B. Address gaps in Rhode Island’s current planning documents to complete the subject matter required for a RPSD

1. *Create a Comprehensive Housing State Guide Plan Element*

Currently, Rhode Island has two housing related elements in its State Guide Plan: the Rhode Island Strategic Housing Plan, adopted in 2006, and the State Housing Plan, adopted in 2000. The Strategic Housing Plan was the result of a concerted effort by the state’s key housing agencies to develop a consensus-based vision for meeting the housing needs of Rhode Island’s citizens. Faced with an affordability gap that continued to widen and affect more households, the General Assembly passed the “Comprehensive Housing Production and Rehabilitation Act of 2004.” This law requires the Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission to develop a strategic plan for housing that quantifies housing needs, identifies implementation strategies to address these needs and provides guidelines for higher density residential development.

These initial housing plans will together be used as the foundation for adding additional information and analysis that will elevate the content so that it may become a key piece of the State’s RPSD. We plan to begin our analysis with the same scenario based planning that was utilized in *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030* to ensure that this component of our RPSD is substantially linked with other key State Guide Plan Elements. The housing component will make certain that the full range of existing and projected housing need is identified throughout the State. The assessment will include need by type, tenure and affordability for all ranges of family income, including an assessment of the need for affordable homes that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Strategies will be developed to promote equitable and affordable housing and expand location and energy efficient housing choices and access to employment for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities. A committee comprising Consortium members and other key stakeholders will guide this effort.

In addition, the Division of Planning is currently developing a statewide analysis of impediments to fair housing choice closely following HUD’s Fair Housing Plan Guide and the language on fair housing found in the NOFA for this grant. This report will be completed by the end of this year and will be incorporated into this State Housing plan. While the report is scheduled to be submitted to HUD before the Social Equity Advisory Committee is fully formed, we do hope HUD will allow for amendments to the report once it has been audited by that committee.

Timeline: March 2012 through Fall 2012 - RFP preparation/consultant search
 Fall 2012 – Winter 2014 – Planning Work

Goal: Create a consolidated State Housing Plan that is fully coordinated with the other components of the RPSD for review and approval by the State Planning Council.

Objectives:

- Describe the nature and extent of the region’s unmet housing needs and evolving challenges based on an assessment of current market conditions, existing affordable housing, patterns of foreclosure, cohort demographic trends and combined housing and transportation costs.
- Support development of growth centers by connecting housing investments to economic development, transportation, infrastructure, community services and amenities, drinking water availability and other place based quality of life resources.
- Analyze land use, access to public transportation, water availability, wastewater capacity, education, social and public safety capacity issues.
- Develop an inventory of potential key housing tools that may enhance housing development at the State and local levels.
- Create guidelines for achieving high quality higher density development appropriate in scale for rural, suburban and urban areas in the State, including recommendations regarding legislative and regulatory changes that may be required to implement the guidelines.
- Develop quantifiable goals and an implementation program of specific actions that are needed in order to meet defined housing needs.
- Ensure that goals and action items align with and support the advancement of social equity, particularly by coordinating with the ongoing Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing section of the State’s Consolidated Plan for HUD.
- Build a constituency to advocate for these specific actions.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Form and facilitate a Housing Committee. (OHCD)
- Develop specific work plan for project. (OHCD, Housing Committee)
- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (OHCD, Housing Committee)
- Conduct stakeholder interviews and data collection. (Consultant Team)
- Conduct regular meetings to review and guide progress. (Consultant Team, OHCD, Housing Committee)
- Analyze existing documents and data to document current housing needs in the state. (Consultant Team)
- With guidance from SEAC, analyze priority housing needs, barriers and opportunities in the State’s low-income communities and communities of color. (Consultant Team, SEAC)
- Align with *Land Use 2025* and the objectives of other components of the RPSD and seek consistency with guidance from the Social Equity Advisory Committee. (Consultant Team, OHCD, SPP, Housing Committee, SEAC)
- Establish preliminary priorities for housing needs; identify key issues/barriers in housing development and affordability; summarize housing strategies. (Consultant Team)
- Develop a summary catalog of potential key housing tools. (Consultant Team)

- Develop detailed outline of the State Housing Plan and guidelines for higher density development. (Consultant Team)
- Where feasible, estimate resources and financing needed to achieve the targets across the state. (Consultant Team)
- Conduct public meetings, present drafts to councils and committees. (Consultant Team)
- Finalize draft plan and recommend adoption to State Planning Council. (SPP)

Products/Outcomes:

- Housing Committee
- Final Comprehensive State Housing Plan
 - Executive Summary of the Plan
 - Guidelines for Higher Density Development
 - Catalog of Key Housing Tools
 - Related maps

2. Create a Comprehensive Economic Development State Guide Plan Element

Currently, Rhode Island has two economic development related elements in its State Guide Plan: the *Rhode Island Economic Development Plan and Policies* and the *Industrial Land Use Plan*, both adopted in 2000, provide objectives and policies that are used by staff to review all projects and comprehensive plans that are required by statute to be reviewed by the Statewide Planning Program for consistency with the State Guide Plan. These initial economic development plans will together be used as the foundation for adding additional information and analysis that will elevate the content so that it may become a key piece of the State’s RPSD. As part of this effort, we are looking to better coordinate with the goals and mission of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (EDC), a consortium member, whose mission is to create jobs, help companies expand and develop their workforce and identify opportunities to bring new companies into the state.

This plan, as with the other components outlined, will begin with the same scenario based planning that was utilized in the Land Use, Transportation and Housing elements. This plan will drastically expand the scope of the current plan and link with the other key RPSD elements by addressing activities that capitalize on the location efficiency of places by connecting housing, jobs, transit, amenities and other quality of life resources. All avenues for stimulating the economy and creating jobs that are mentioned in the SCRPG NOFA will be addressed in this effort.

Timeline: June 2012 through Fall 2012 - RFP preparation/consultant search
 Fall 2012 – Winter 2014 – Planning Work

Goal: Create a State Economic Development Plan that is fully coordinated with the other components of the RPSD and other local economic development plans and initiatives that support the RPSD for review and approval by the State Planning Council.

Objectives:

- Describe the nature and extent of the region’s economic development needs and evolving challenges and barriers to development based on an assessment of current market conditions and future projections.

- Support development of growth centers by connecting economic development investments to housing, transportation, community services and amenities, drinking water availability, wastewater capacity and other place based quality of life resources.
- Develop quantifiable goals and an implementation program of specific state-level actions and tools needed in order to meet defined economic development needs related to:
 - Expansion, creation or reuse of existing commercial and industrial centers
 - Reuse of brownfields
 - Special incentive districts for the arts, historic preservation, “pad ready” sites, etc.
 - Inclusion of underrepresented populations in economic sectors
 - Training to support the full range of workforce and worker needs in the region
 - Creation of new jobs and decreasing the State’s unemployment rate
 - Maintaining or expanding the state’s agricultural sector
- Ensure that goals and action items advance economic opportunities in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Build a constituency to advocate for these specific actions.
- Build an ongoing public-private partnership and dialogue with EDC, local communities, developers, business owners and other stakeholders to ensure broad public input and ownership of the plan.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Form and facilitate the Economic Development Committee. (EDC and SPP)
- Develop specific work plan for the project. (EDC, Economic Development Committee)
- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (EDC, Economic Development Committee)
- Conduct stakeholder interviews and data collection. (Consultant Team)
- Conduct regular meetings to review and guide progress. (Consultant Team, EDC, Economic Development Committee)
- Analyze existing documents and data to document current economic development conditions and needs in the State. (Consultant Team)
- Align with *Land Use 2025* and the objectives of other components of the RPSD and seek consistency with guidance from the Social Equity Advisory Committee. (Consultant Team, EDC, SPP, Economic Development Committee, SEAC)
- With guidance from SEAC, analyze specific economic development needs, barriers and opportunities facing low-income communities and communities of color. (Consultant Team, SEAC)
- Establish preliminary priorities for economic development needs; identify key issues/barriers to success; summarize economic development strategies. (Consultant Team)
- Develop a summary catalog of potential key economic development tools. (Consultant Team)
- Develop detailed outline of the Economic Development Plan. (Consultant Team)
- Where feasible, estimate resources and financing needed to achieve plan strategies across the state. (Consultant Team)
- Conduct public meetings and other public outreach, present drafts to councils and committees. (Consultant Team)
- Finalize draft plan and recommend adoption to State Planning Council. (SPP)

Products/Outcomes:

- Economic Development Committee
- State Economic Development Plan
 - Executive Summary of the Economic Development Plan
 - Catalog of Key Economic Development Tools
 - Related maps

II. CREATE AN INTEGRATED REGIONAL PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Using the Livability Principles as guide posts, the goals, strategies and actions contained in the substantially linked Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development and Housing State Guide Plan Elements as well as the climate change research outlined previously, will be synthesized into an integrated RPSD implementation program. This program will outline specific steps that will move the region from planning to action, articulating short, medium and long term strategies that are necessary to move the region toward sustainability. It will also assign responsibility and provide cost estimates as feasible.

Timeline: February 2014 through February 2015

Goal: Create a living, publicly accessible document that will guide the State and municipalities toward its sustainability goals for review and approval by the State Planning Council.

Objectives:

- Ensure that all strategies in the RPSD are integrated across topics – the format should make clear where a strategy meets objectives of multiple plan components.
- Determine policy and program changes needed to implement strategies, and develop specific recommendations for action to create this positive change.
- Create written and virtual plan formats that are easy and intuitive to read and understand, and that can be regularly updated to reflect changes and track successes.
- Link all strategies to a realistic time frame, budget, funding source and implementing entity wherever possible.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Throughout the planning process in years one and two of the SCRPG, ensure that all parties working on the various components of the plan regularly communicate, share information and make note of similar or complimentary planning strategies under development. (SPP with Consultant Team and Consortium)
- Review final planning documents for consistency in recommendations, message, format and scenarios, and for successful integration of social equity. (SPP with Consultant Team, Consortium and SEAC)
- Review final strategies in the major components of the RPSD and develop an integrated list of implementation strategies. (SPP with Consultant Team and Consortium)
- Scan strategies for policy implications and identify priority policy work. (SPP)
- Design printed and electronic formats, including social media pages, for the plan and implementation strategies that are easy and intuitive to read and understand, visually rich

and interactive, and that can be regularly updated to reflect changes and track successes. (Consultant Team)

- Conduct public meetings, present drafts to councils and committees. (Consultant Team)
- SEAC, Housing and Economic Development committees and other stakeholders will review drafts to ensure their perspectives and findings are captured accurately. (SEAC, Other Committees)
- Finalize draft plan and recommend adoption to State Planning Council. (SPP)

Products/Outcomes:

- Regional Plan for Sustainable Development
- Implementation Program
- Specific recommendations for actions needed for implementation

III. GROWTH CENTERS

This program activity seeks to identify and delineate specific geographic areas within the State that are most suitable for reuse and development including infrastructure investment. In order to continue to create truly livable places in Rhode Island, we must ensure that housing and transportation options and environmental and employment amenities are accessible to all residents. A key aspect of Rhode Island’s RPSD will be establishing a process and set of implementation tools and incentives for municipalities to designate and map growth centers, specific geographic areas within the State that are most suitable for reuse and development including areas most appropriate for infrastructure investment and with drinking water availability. *Land Use 2025* began this process by creating the Urban Services Boundary. *Land Use 2025, Transportation 2030* and *RI Water 2030* also recognize that not all growth can or should be accommodated within the Urban Services Boundary and that, even within the Urban Service Boundary there are areas where a higher concentration of growth is more appropriate, particularly around high capacity transit and available drinking water. In order to truly curb sprawl and encourage and fund compact mixed use development, the entire state must be examined and areas appropriate for more concentrated development must be clearly mapped.

As a part of this grant, we are proposing to conduct a series of statewide mapping and data initiatives that will make it easier for municipalities to define where more compact development should go, and what natural and cultural landscapes should be preserved. Further, we will work directly with communities to provide as much technical assistance as we are able to get them as far along as possible to formally designating growth centers as they update their Comprehensive Plans. This work will build on the many municipal efforts already in place to encourage more compact development. The concept of growth centers will help cities and towns plan for the future by identifying where they want growth and development to occur and what they want that growth to look like. By planning ahead, communities can reduce their costs for building and maintaining the infrastructure needed to support residential, commercial and industrial growth. At the same time, by directing future growth to specific areas, leveraging existing public investment in mass transit, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, etc., the character of other parts of the community can be preserved, including historic areas, agricultural lands and open space. These growth centers will be dynamic and efficient centers for development that have a core of commercial and community services, mixed-use development, and natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place. They may differ in size (i.e. village

centers in rural towns to major mixed-use hubs in urban communities), regional importance and services provided, but will share common characteristics such as public and private investments in services, facilities, buildings, transportation, water and wastewater systems; and some combination of schools, commercial and industrial buildings, and housing.

Timeline: June 2012 through Fall 2012 - RFP preparation/consultant search
Fall 2012 – Winter 2014 – Planning and Mapping Work

Goal: Identify municipal-level growth centers that are aligned with *Land Use 2025*, and foster sustainable and equitable nodes for public and private investments in water supply, wastewater and other infrastructure, housing, public transportation and economic development.

Objectives:

- Fill gaps in developing detailed statewide mapping and analysis for natural and cultural resources and the built environment.
- Develop and refine alternative scenarios for development and preservation using robust local public engagement.
- Spur an open public dialogue on the wide ranging positive community impacts of growth center focused development.
- Identify local areas most suitable for development and preferred preservation areas.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Form and facilitate a Growth Centers Committee. (DEM, SPP, GSRI, RIDOT, EDC, others)
- Develop specific work plan for the project. (DEM, Growth Centers Committee)
- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (DEM, Growth Centers Committee)
- Conduct stakeholder interviews, focus groups and data collection. (Consultant Team)
- Conduct regular meetings to review and guide progress. (DEM, Growth Centers Committee)
- Analyze existing mapping data layers, past land use/land cover maps, municipal future land use maps from comprehensive plans and other past work on developing higher density nodes in the State to document current conditions and needs. (Consultant Team)
- Gather any necessary new data to update mapping layers. (Consultant Team)
- Ensure that new data is linked to past data sets from 1995 and 2003 so that changes can be tracked over time. (Consultant Team with oversight from SPP)
- Align with *Land Use 2025*, *Transportation 2030*, *RI Water 2030* and other components of the RPSD, and seek consistency with guidance from the Social Equity Advisory Committee. (Consultant Team, EDC, SPP, SEAC, Growth Centers Committee)
- With guidance from SEAC, analyze the impact of the creation of growth centers on low-income communities and communities of color across the state. (Consultant Team, SEAC)
- Conduct public meetings and focus groups for clusters of municipalities (based on geography or community type – i.e. rural, suburban, urban), present maps, tools and guidelines to municipal planners and officials. (Consultant Team)

- Recommend statewide guidance for identifying growth centers, varied, as needed, for rural, suburban and urban areas for review and approval by the State Planning Council. (Consultant Team)
- Identify key issues/barriers to success, and recommend potential solutions. (Consultant Team)
- Identify incentives and “next steps” needed for municipalities to define, map and codify their growth centers. (Consultant Team)

Products/Outcomes:

- Updated statewide mapping layers for natural and cultural resources, wildlife and existing built environment, including infrastructure.
- Statewide guidance for establishing growth centers.
- Tool box of incentives for prioritizing investments in growth centers.
- Recommendations for changes to state laws and regulations and municipal regulations and policies to facilitate growth center investments.

IV. CAPACITY BUILDING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

This program activity seeks to build capacity within state and local government and among participants in the planning process by increasing skills and technical expertise. A key component of the State’s implementation strategy is to ensure that capacity is built within state and local government and among participants in the planning process by increasing skills and technical expertise and emphasizing the sharing of resources and knowledge for maximum efficiency. Although we will not have a set of specific steps to move from planning to action until we have filled in the gaps on our RPSD, we do anticipate with a high degree of certainty that building the local capacity of our municipal and community partners will be of high priority.

To increase capacity, we plan to build on the very successful Land-Use Training Collaborative, founded by Grow Smart Rhode Island, a consortium member. This Collaborative is an alliance of agencies and organizations that share a commitment to the principles of smart growth and sustainable community development. The partnering members believe that if we are to curb the sprawling development patterns that threaten Rhode Island, municipal officials and staff must be fluent and comfortable with the principles and practices of sound land-use planning. At the same time, citizens must be equipped with the knowledge necessary to have a stronger voice in local decisions and the development community must also be brought into local planning efforts. The programs are designed to build the capacity of communities, regions and the state as a whole to adopt and implement land-use policies and practices that preserve community character and are equitable, environmentally sound and economically beneficial. The Land Use Training Collaborative will be utilized to design educational sessions on topics specified by our grant partners during the RPSD process and included in the detailed implementation program.

In addition to using the Land Use Collaborative to offer capacity building opportunities through this grant, the consortium plans to work with a recognized expert to assist grant consortium members and other grant partners in building capacity for designing and implementing more integrated community engagement that promotes social equity and reaches populations traditionally marginalized in the planning process. This work, and whenever possible the work of the Land Use Collaborative, will also specifically support the training needs of the SEAC.

The Consortium and Consultant Team will develop protocols, tools and best practices to support widespread implementation well after the grant ends.

Timeline: September 2012 through February 2015

Goal: Develop protocols, tools and best practices to support widespread implementation beyond the three year grant period.

Objectives:

- Evaluate technical assistance needs of municipalities to implement the State's sustainability goals.
- Define lessons learned and how planning differs in various settings and community types (i.e. staffing levels, access to technology, etc.).
- Develop new and update/refine existing tools for efficient replication of successful approaches, including training, publications, etc.
- Develop new and update/refine public engagement tools applicable to a wide variety of activities.

Major Activities: Activities in the development of each protocol, tool or best practice will be tailored to specific needs based on extensive surveys of municipal planners, officials and other staff. They will be more thoroughly defined as part of a project-specific Work Plan before work begins.

- Conduct surveys of Rhode Island municipal officials, including planning boards, zoning boards, City/Town Councilmembers and mayors and town managers, to determine what technical assistance and capacity building tools are most needed. (SPP)
- Establish systems for identifying, capturing and incorporating best practices. (SPP)
- Identify priority technical assistance and capacity building strategies. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Form Technical Assistance Committee(s) if appropriate. (Consortium)
- Establish project-specific work plans and information sharing protocols. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Develop and test initial tools/best practices/workshops with stakeholders. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Refine tools/best practices/workshops. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Make final tools/best practices/workshops available for widespread use via a variety of print, web-based and social media. (Consortium, Consultant Team)

Products/Outcomes:

- Training curricula for new Land Use Training Collaborative topics and integrated community engagement process
- Tools for analysis, engagement, etc.
- Protocols for analysis, engagement, etc.
- Best practices and models for their replication

- Distributed materials and presentations for all workshops developed as a part of this grant, which will be available for use by other regions via a variety of print, web-based and social media

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

This grant provides an opportunity to build on past public engagement efforts to further a framework of regional equity as a central concept to Rhode Island's RPSD and its implementation. To that end, we have included three non-profit groups in our grant consortium to assist us in developing a comprehensive public participation strategy that will reach the broadest possible cross-section of local communities and underserved populations.

A. Formulate a public participation strategy to reach target populations, engage them in the planning process and ensure sustained participation throughout implementation of the RPSD. The development of *Land Use 2025*, *Transportation 2030* and most recently *RI Water 2030*, included a broad outreach and public participation program in order to engage a diverse cross section of the region's residents. The outreach and public participation program for these efforts included the use of surveys (on-line and in person), town meetings, smaller regional meetings with municipal and regional planning officials, meetings with the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association, stakeholder advisory committees and planning charrettes. A number of strategies were also used to reach out to minorities, low-income individuals and persons with disabilities including employing an environmental justice e-mail list consisting of social advocacy groups, a bus users forum, an open house at a major public transit hub and publication of resource materials in Spanish. We will use this successful foundation as the basis of a public participation strategy for completing the region's RPSD. It is also important to engage the private sector and business interests that play significant roles in regional economic growth. Under the leadership of the State's Economic Development Corporation, we plan to engage chambers of commerce, business groups and leaders of health care and education institutions in the process of completing the RPSD.

Timeline: May 2012 – February 2015

Goal: Incorporate the viewpoints and interests of constituencies of Consortium members, local leaders, organizations, the business community and other members of the public into the RPSD by engaging them meaningfully.

Objectives:

- Ensure that the RPSD is informed by as many viewpoints and as much information from stakeholders as possible.
- Develop local leaders who understand planning processes and can make more sustainable and equitable decisions.
- Expand the tools, strategies and networks available to decision-makers through use of social media and other strategies to engage a diversity of stakeholders and incorporate their interests into decisions.
- Increase understanding of issues and opportunities facing the region.
- Bring together people from communities in the region who rarely meet in dialogue.

- Continually broaden the voices that shape planning priorities and programs in Rhode Island and seek to implement the RPSD.

Major Activities (responsible party):

Major public participation activities will be tailored to specific needs and defined as part of a project-specific Work Plan before work begins.

- Form and facilitate a public participation and communications committee, as needed. (Consortium)
- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (Consortium)
- Develop specific work plan for outreach, starting with initial stages of each grant activity, coordinated with the work plans related to the SEAC and communications. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Conduct in-person and virtual forums geared toward different populations and geographic areas of the state to educate and inform the public on the various components of the planning process as well as gather information to create, improve and refine plans. (Consortium, Consultant Team, SEAC).
- Throughout the planning process, analyze success of particular strategies at reaching target populations. Refine and retool strategies accordingly. (Consortium, Consultant Team)

Products/Outcomes:

- Detailed written public participation strategy outlining outreach efforts for all projects included in the grant award
- More robust and diverse public participation than in past planning efforts that has a meaningful positive impact on project outcomes
- A well and diversely informed RPSD

B. Establish a Social Equity Advisory Committee

To improve community representation and participation, we are proposing a Social Equity Advisory Committee (SEAC), which will be established as an advisory committee to the grant Consortium. The SEAC will draw on the first-hand experience and knowledge of organizations and individuals living in the most marginalized communities. Additionally, members of the SEAC will be armed with the guidance and training that is needed to be active participants in the RPSD development process and will be provided with the tools necessary to assist in implementing the RPSD action plan in their communities.

The consortium will work directly with community agencies and organizations to seek out interested individuals to participate in this regional planning process. Through this process, the Consortium will identify approximately 15 members to the SEAC. SEAC members will be paid a stipend to recognize their value to the process and to assure their participation throughout the grant period.

Capacity of the SEAC members to effectively participate in the regional planning process will be built through training and mentoring. A complete curriculum will be developed for the SEAC. The topics to be covered may include planning methods, social media and other tools that can be

used to address social inequity and foster community engagement. In addition, the training for the SEAC will include a discussion of the basics of regional planning, including the state's existing legal framework and the principles of smart growth, a review of the status of State Guide Plan elements related to housing, economic development, drinking water supply, land use and transportation and a review and explanation of the Livability Principles as outlined by HUD.

The SEAC will work with the State Planning Council and its staff to audit *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030* to identify social equity gaps and propose amendments for review and approval by the State Planning Council to address those gaps. The SEAC will also develop policies and procedures to ensure that social equity is better incorporated into the State's regional planning process moving forward and will actively participate in the process of developing the State's Housing and Economic Development elements of the RPSD and the associated detailed execution program.

Throughout the grant period SEAC members will remain in communication with and accountable to their communities to ensure that the community's vision and needs continue to be actively reflected by the SEAC member in all regional planning discussions. With the assistance of staff, SEAC members will help organize community forums and other public outreach at which they will report on their work, solicit input and receive feedback as they participate in the development of the RPSD. The intent of this process is not only to guarantee that the RPSD accurately reflects the vision and needs of the state's underserved and underrepresented populations, but also to produce relationships that will become the building blocks necessary for completing and implementing the RPSD. At the conclusion of the grant period, the SEAC will propose next steps for continuing their work, as it is imperative that these community leaders are committed not only to the completion of the RPSD but also to the successful implementation of the identified strategies.

Timeline: September 2012 through February 2015

Goal: Improve the outcomes of the RPSD for marginalized communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, while expanding the capacity of the State to advance social equity through future activities.

Objectives:

- Establish a Social Equity Advisory Committee (SEAC) – a core group of experts on social equity who advise the Consortium on advancing social equity through the RPSD.
- Expand the capacity of this group to advise the Consortium through training.
- Ensure that marginalized communities, particularly low-income populations and communities of color, are well represented in public participation processes.
- Incorporate social equity objectives and strategies in the updates of the housing and economic development state guide plan elements, and recommend changes to *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030* that will enhance social equity outcomes. Improve the capacity of Consortium members and the State Planning Council to advance social equity through their activities.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (Consortium)
- Establish systems for recruiting local leaders to serve on the SEAC. Recruit SEAC members. (Consultant Team and Consortium)
- Create opportunities for regular dialogue between the SEAC and the Consortium. (SPP)
- Identify capacity building needs for the SEAC. (Consultant Team and Consortium)
- Develop activities and trainings to meet the SEAC's capacity building needs, implement trainings with SEAC. Trainings will be coordinated with those developed under Task IV. (Consultant Team)
- Develop strategies for disseminating the trainings and activities, both within and beyond the SEAC's membership. (Consultant Team and Consortium)
- Review Land Use 2025 and Transportation 2030 concurrently with review and implementation updates of these documents (Activity 1A), and make specific recommendations to improve social equity outcomes aimed at relevant decision-makers and implementing bodies. (SEAC)
- Contribute to housing plan and economic development plan subcommittees. Provide guidance on public outreach and inclusion of social equity objectives and strategies. Review draft plans. (SEAC)
- Review the State's planning and public engagement processes. Make recommendations to improve participation of and plan outcomes for marginalized communities, both for SCRPG activities and broadly for Rhode Island planning efforts. This includes identifying capacity building needs within the State and among Consortium members. (Consultant)
- Conduct forums geared toward different populations and geographic areas of the state to educate and inform the public on the planning process as well as gather information to create, improve and refine plans. (SEAC).

Products/Outcomes:

- SEAC Curriculum including written materials and presentation slides that can be shared with other regions.
- Audit reports of *Land Use 2025* and *Transportation 2030*.
- Reports from local community forums.
- Annual report outlining progress made toward increasing and diversifying public participation.
- A guidance document for the Consortium to increase diversity of participation and advancement of social equity through SCRPG activities.
- A guidance document for the State Planning Council on improving procedural and distributional equity in planning activities, including potential future engagement of SEAC.

C. Develop an overall communication strategy for sharing data, publicizing project outcomes and sharing lessons learned in drafting the State's RPSD

The grant consortium will work to ensure that information is readily available to all residents, business owners and other stakeholders that would like to be involved in the RPSD development process. We will create a webpage on the RI Division of Planning website dedicated to this effort

and will explore the utility of creating social media pages as well. We will post all public participation opportunities, meeting minutes, draft documents, etc. and will offer a direct link to the consortium for feedback. The Division also has an e-newsletter that is distributed to several hundred recipients each month. This publication will include a monthly summary of grant activities and upcoming opportunities for participation. Several of our grant consortium members also have publications that are distributed regularly to different audiences. We will utilize those opportunities for communication as well. We will also engage the SEAC to ensure that communication materials that are appropriate for their communities are developed.

Timeline: September 2012 – February 2015

Goal: Create a robust, two-way communications system through a variety of traditional and social media to disseminate information throughout the planning process and publicize ways the public can get involved.

Objectives:

- Distribute information through a variety of media such as mailings, flyers, posters, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, webpages and social media.
- Strive to identify and utilize media that reaches traditionally underserved populations, including non-English language media.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for active input from the public with all communications – one-way information sharing is not enough.
- Communications should strive, whenever possible, to educate the public on the positive impacts of compact development, in an accessible, concise and non-threatening way.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Form and facilitate a public participation and communications committee, as needed. (Consortium)
- Develop and release RFP for consultant services, review applicants and select a Consultant team. (Consortium)
- Develop specific work plan for communications and media, coordinated with work plans for the SEAC and Public Participation. (Consortium, Consultant Team)
- Throughout the planning process, analyze success of particular communications strategies at reaching target populations. Refine and retool strategies accordingly. (Consortium, Consultant Team)

Products/Outcomes:

- Interactive project website and social media
- Newsletters and other articles/publications
- Flyers, handouts, posters and other physical media

VI. TRACKING PROGRESS THROUGH PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Qualitative performance measures that can be regularly tracked, compared and published will be developed as part of the implementation program for A Sustainable Rhode Island. These performance measures, along with baseline data and related indicators, will be essential to benchmarking the state's progress in achieving the vision outlined in the plan. *Transportation*

2030, the state's transportation plan, is the one component of the State Guide Plan that currently includes performance measures; however, the State has not been very successful in systematically tracking progress using these measures. A consultant team will engage Consortium Members, other partners and the public to develop simple yet meaningful performance measures tracking progress on issues such as land use, transportation, housing, economic development, social equity and climate change. On top of this, the consultant team will review existing available data sources, identify new data needs and lay out a framework and expected costs for sustaining and updating data, indicators and performance measures over time.

Timeline: June 2012 through February 2015

Goal: Develop new and refine existing datasets and make them available in ways to benchmark the state's change and support informed decision-making.

Objectives:

- Strengthen existing and potential data collaborations.
- Update, publish and analyze data, indicators and performance measures regularly.
- Benchmark the state's progress in achieving RPSD objectives, demonstrating how the state is changing over time, and comparing Rhode Island to other areas of the country.
- Provide opportunity for regular media coverage on sustainable development in Rhode Island.
- Inform assessments of the state's sustainable development efforts.
- Inform regional analyses and policy making done by the Consortium and its members, the State Planning Council and others.

Major Activities (responsible party):

- Develop specific work plan for program of data collection, including appropriate role and structure for engaging partners. (Consortium)
- Engage stakeholders in identifying priority data for collection. (Public participation consultant, Consortium)
- Compile and/or collect priority, baseline data. (Consultant Team)
- Integrate data into a "warehouse" for public access. (Consultant Team)
- Create a simple but holistic set of indicators and performance measures to track progress of Rhode Island towards its sustainability goals. (Consultant Team, Consortium)
- Release indicators and performance measures online and in written reports. (SPP)
- Identify ways to improve public access to and understanding of the performance measures and other key data sources. (Consultant Team, Consortium)
- Design processes to engage Consortium members and the broader public in understanding the performance measures, indicators and their implications, and implement it. (Consultant Team, Consortium)
- Design process to engage Consortium members and broader public in re-assessing performance measures and indicators on a regular basis. (Consultant Team, Consortium, SPP)
- Use performance measures as approved by the State Planning Council to regularly reevaluate and refine the strategies of the RPSD. (SPP)

Products/Outcomes:

- Collection of baseline data for the State easily accessible to the public through a user friendly electronic portal.
- Detailed list of performance measures that will be used to track the short and long term success of the region's RPSD.
- Process, as approved by the State Planning Council, to ensure that performance is regularly evaluated and appropriately restructured to meet the State's needs.