



Western North Carolina Livable Communities Initiative

Consortium Agreement

Introduction

The Western North Carolina Livable Communities Initiative is a 3-year project to develop strategies at the local and regional level to:

- **Enhance economic competitiveness**, including expanding sustainable and diverse employment options that pay a “living wage.”
- **Provide more transportation choices**, including developing and expanding the region’s clean, efficient and affordable transportation choices.
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing.**
- **Support existing communities.**
- **Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.**
- **Value communities and neighborhoods.**
- **Preserve our natural and cultural resources.**
- **Expand and utilize more local, renewable energy sources.**

These local and regional strategies will be developed by a consortium of local governments, organizations, and residents in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Transylvania, and Madison Counties, creating a plan to foster economic prosperity through a regional vision for sustainable development. The resulting plan and strategies can be adopted in whole or in part. The process will include significant public outreach and involvement, with a goal of ensuring equity in participation while honoring the values of the region.

Citizens and leaders in Western North Carolina have identified “greater regional coordination” related to economic development, quality growth, and sustainability as a primary need for the region. The project will allow local governments, businesses, non-profits, citizens, and others to realize unprecedented regional coordination on jobs, energy, housing, transportation, resources, and other interconnected issues. This investment will help bring our region **new jobs, more livable communities, energy and financial savings, and carbon emission reductions.**

During the three-year project, the Consortium will work together to gather public input and weave together existing plans and strategies across topic areas listed above (our Local Livability Framework). The Local Livability Framework is aligned with the principles of the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

Goals

Through the course of the project, existing plans and strategies will be woven together with public input into a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development that will guide the region's development going forward. The goals of the project and Plan development include:

- To create a plan that promotes economic prosperity throughout the region, including for those people traditionally underrepresented
- To ensure broad and diverse participation in the project through the Consortium and its Governance Structure, through effective public communication, and through working relationships with partners and consultants that are effective and successful
- To create a regional/community picture based on existing plans and data, as well as future scenarios and alternatives that can be shared with the public through a variety of public engagement efforts. These public engagement efforts will be guided by a detailed outreach strategy to ensure widespread involvement.
- To gather widespread, unprecedented community input on scenario planning models and existing, combined plans and strategies, draft plan and alternatives, and the final Regional Plan. To ensure that the input received is incorporated into the plan and alternatives.
- To ensure that planning for transportation, housing, jobs, energy, land use, and cultural and natural resources is integrated.
- To implement the Regional Plan through incorporation of identified strategies and projects into other state, regional, and local plans, by seeking implementation opportunities throughout, and by developing an ongoing structure and funding strategy to carry the project forward.
- To ensure that the Regional Plan is a "living document", designed to be a flexible tool that will be modified as the opportunities and needs of the region change over time

Consortium Governance and Structure

Governance Structure

The Consortium will represent residents and organizations in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Transylvania, and Madison Counties. The Consortium will include members from public and private housing, planning, transportation, economic development, research, educational and philanthropic organizations, and others. The work of the Consortium will be governed by a Steering Committee, with representatives from local governments and each of the working groups that will work together on specific issues related to sectors identified in the Local Livability Framework. Land-of-Sky Regional Council will staff and facilitate the work of the Steering Committee. See Appendix A (Consortium Governance Structure) for more information.

Consortium members agree to delegate decision-making responsibility for the planning process to the Steering Committee, on which they will be represented by elected or appointed members (see Appendix A: Consortium Governance Structure). The Steering Committee will work towards consensus when making decisions, but will rely upon the majority of voting

members present to decide any question which cannot be resolved by consensus. A simple majority (51%) of voting members shall constitute a quorum for transacting business.

Benefits to Consortium Members

Shape regional plan

Consortium Members will play a critical role in shaping the Regional Plan, both in assisting with review of existing Plans and by receiving and incorporating public input received. The Regional Plan will be a place where Consortium Members can find common ground on shared goals and objectives that the region can work towards together. Consortium Members can play an active role in ensuring the Regional Plan reflects and advances the mission of their local government, organization, or constituency.

Gain access to tools, models, data, and best practices

Consortium Members will be able to access the tools, models, and best practices developed through the Planning process. Improvements to existing data in the region will be made during the first stages of the project, and Consortium Members can take advantage of these improved data in their own work.

Assist with ensuring that a broad spectrum of communities and organizations are involved

Consortium Members can help ensure that a broad spectrum of communities and organizations are involved in the process, both through reaching out to others to participate on work groups and by assisting with public outreach efforts.

Identify funding opportunities and opportunities for implementation of identified projects

Throughout the project, staff and Consortium Members will be looking for opportunities for funding to implement the Plan and the projects and strategies identified in it. Consortium Members will benefit directly from implementation of projects that advance the common goals and objectives identified in the Plan.

Responsibilities of Consortium Members

Participate in the Consortium

Consortium Members must play an active, participatory role in the process. This includes participation in subject-specific workgroups, as well as in cross-sector subgroups as needed. This also includes participating in the selection of Steering Committee representatives of the workgroups, and serving on the Steering Committee if elected or appointed to do so. Consortium Members will assist in forming workgroups and ensuring that a broad cross-section of the community is represented on workgroups, particularly from communities that are traditionally under-represented in planning processes.

Share Information

Consortium Members will assist with circulating information about the project and help involve others in the project. Consortium Members will assist with outreach both to members of the public and to members of their organization or local government. Consortium Members will designate a point person within their organization who will serve as the primary contact for the project and who will be responsible for communicating the activities of the Consortium to their organization and constituents. If the point of contact changes, the Consortium Member must inform Land-of-Sky staff with contact information for the new designated contact person.

Assist with Plan Implementation

Consortium Members will help identify opportunities to implement the projects and strategies identified in the Plan. Consortium Members will help identify elements of existing Regional Plans and other documents that need revision in order to be consistent with the common regional goals identified in the Plan. Consortium Members will help facilitate revisions to other regional planning documents as needed.

Special Conditions

Expansion of Consortium Membership

Any eligible entity may join the Consortium at any time. Those wishing to participate in nominations of candidates for Steering Committee membership must join by October 1, 2011. The Steering Committee may determine that new workgroups are needed and will undertake outreach to engage new members in new workgroups if needed. The Steering Committee may undertake special outreach to engage underrepresented constituencies as needed.

Changes to Membership Terms

The Steering Committee may, after consultation with Consortium Members, elect to change the terms of membership at any time and will provide written notification of any changes to the entire Consortium membership.

Duration of Consortium Agreement

This agreement shall remain in force for the duration of the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant, which is expected to conclude on December 31, 2014.

Termination of Consortium Agreement

Any member may, at any time, provide written notice to Land-of-Sky Regional Council of their intent to leave the Consortium. This will result in the termination of any benefits due to membership in the Consortium unless the parties agree to the contrary under mutually acceptable terms.

Signature

This document is to be signed by a representative of each Consortium Member who has the authority to enter into an agreement on behalf of that entity. By signing this Consortium Agreement, you agree to join the Western North Carolina Livable Communities Consortium.

EXECUTED as of _____, 2011.

Name

Title

Municipality, County, or Organization

Primary Point of Contact:

Name

Title

Phone

Email

Mailing Address

City/Town

Zip Code

Appendix A: Consortium Governance Structure

The Western North Carolina Livable Communities Initiative (WNC LCI) will be guided by a Consortium representing residents and organizations in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Transylvania, and Madison Counties. The Consortium will include members from public and private housing, planning, transportation, economic development, research, educational and philanthropic organizations, and others. The purpose of the Consortium will be to oversee the development of a regional plan that weaves together existing plans and strategies throughout the region to foster economic prosperity through a regional vision that identifies implementable projects and actions. The Initiative will include significant public outreach and involvement throughout.

The Consortium's work is funded by a three-year, \$1.6 million Regional Planning Grant from the Sustainable Communities Partnerships, a federal collaboration of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). HUD is the federal granting authority. Various local entities have also committed to contribute funds and in-kind contributions to support the project.

Overview of Consortium Governance

The full Consortium will meet several times over the course of the 3-year project. Consortium meetings will include a general session for all participants as well as breakout sessions focused on specific topics. Other Consortium committees and workgroups will be encouraged to meet more regularly to accomplish the tasks in the planning process.

The Consortium is currently led by an Interim Leadership Team, which will transition their involvement in the project as the formal Consortium Governance structure is implemented. Interim Leadership Team members are encouraged to continue participating in the Governance of the project, either through appointment to the Steering Committee (see below) or by participating in a Workgroup.

The Consortium will be led by a 13-member **Steering Committee**, which will be responsible for prioritizing work activities, participating in the selection of consultants, approving public involvement approaches, and making critical recommendations to guide the project and staff. Steering Committee members will be appointed according to the process outlined in this document (see below). Steering Committee members will communicate with members of their constituencies and other workgroup members to share information and gather input. The Steering Committee will be made up of individuals willing to take a lead role in completing the work of the project, and who are able to involve others from their constituencies, organizations, and communities to bring their input back.

Ensuring equity is a critical task in this project. The Land-of-Sky Regional Council Board will work to ensure equity, with the goal that a minimum of 1/3 of Steering Committee members be from traditionally under-represented communities. Some examples of traditionally under-represented communities are included as Appendix B.

The Steering Committee will meet bi-monthly. The Steering Committee shall form subject-specific subcommittees as needed to work on tasks with staff when action or a decision is needed between meetings.

The Steering Committee will be made up of members appointed by the following process:

- The City of Asheville will have one seat, appointed by Asheville City Council (the central city is a required member under HUD guidelines)
- The County Commissioners of each County will each appoint 1 member to represent the region's member governments, with membership distributed across the region's geography and from communities of varying sizes (rural, suburban, and urban), for a total of 5 members, one from each county
- Each Workgroup (described below) will nominate 2 – 3 individuals as candidates for appointment to the Steering Committee. From those Workgroup nominations, the Land-of-Sky Regional Council Board will appoint 1 representative from each Workgroup (for a total of 7 representatives of the Workgroups). The Land-of-Sky Regional Council Board will be responsible for achieving equity in the Workgroup appointments to the Steering Committee, ensuring geographic diversity, inclusion of under-represented communities, and representation from a variety of sectors (non-profit organizations, local governments, business). The Land-of-Sky Regional Council Board may recommend changes to the Steering Committee structure if deemed necessary to meet the Consortium's equity goals.
- The Federal and State Partners Workgroup will have 3 Ex-Officio (non-voting) representatives on the Steering Committee, one each from the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Steering Committee members should be willing to:

- commit their time to participating actively in the Initiative, including a commitment to attend a minimum of 80% of Steering Committee meetings;
- provide leadership, share work responsibilities, and listen to their fellow Steering Committee and Consortium members; and
- communicate with and represent the interests of their workgroups and constituencies

All consortium members will self-select into one of 8 **Workgroups**, organized around the topic areas listed below. Workgroup members will form partnerships, identify opportunities and challenges, develop strategies, and look for ways to implement projects identified in the planning process. Workgroups will focus on the specific topic areas below, and will form smaller cross-sector subgroups (with representation across multiple Workgroups) as needed to complete various tasks and ensure that deeper analysis cuts across various topic areas. Collaboration amongst Workgroup members, and across workgroups, will be a critical element of the project.

The Steering Committee may choose to combine or adjust Workgroups if necessary as the project progresses. If the Steering Committee combines two Workgroups, the representative from those Workgroups will remain on the Steering Committee as follows: one representative shall continue as a representative of the new combined Workgroup, and one shall become an At-Large Steering Committee member.

Workgroup topic areas:

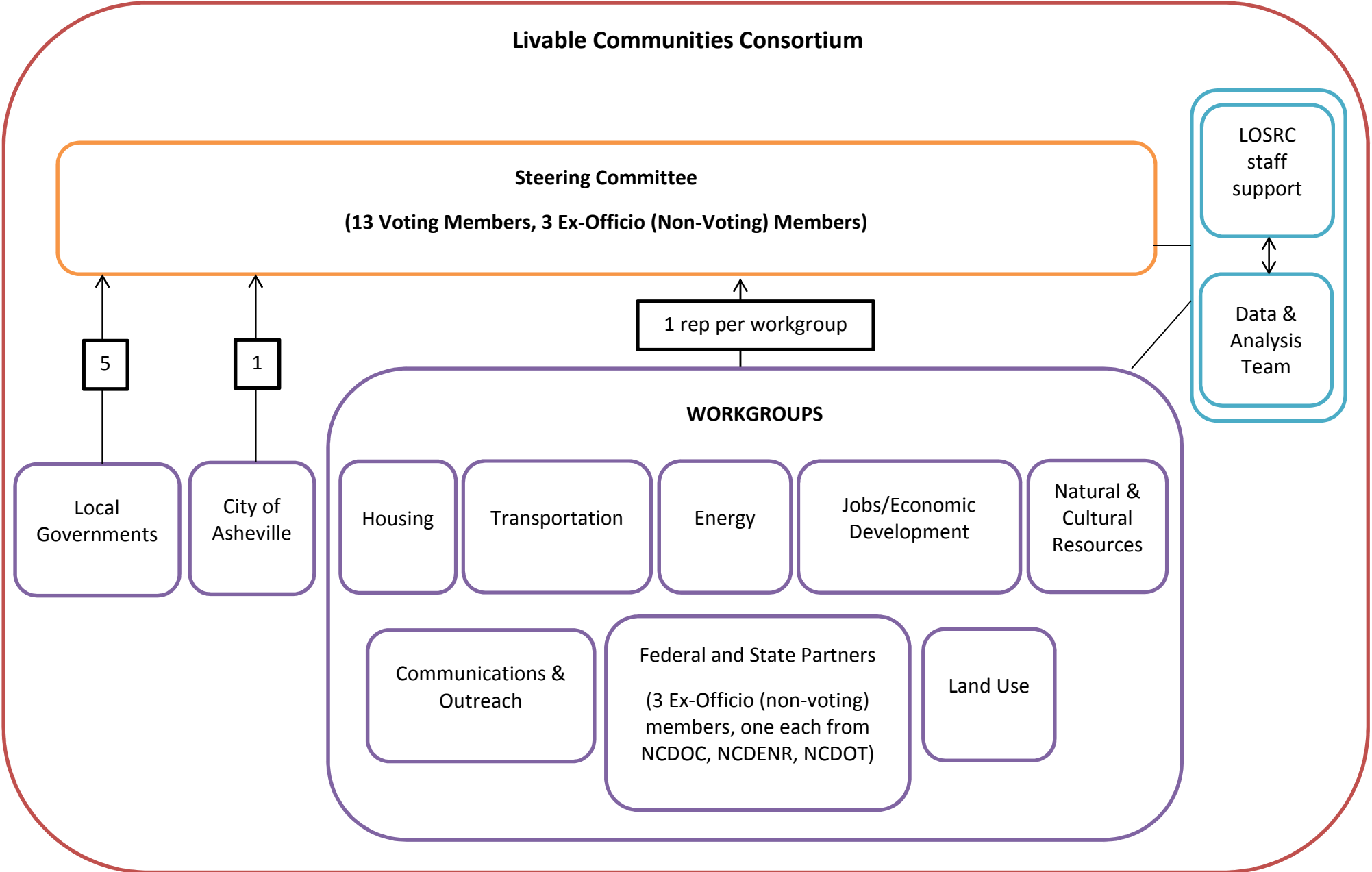
- Housing
- Transportation
- Energy
- Jobs/Economic Development
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Communications and Outreach
- Federal and State Partners

Each consortium member may join or participate in multiple Workgroups if interested. Non-governmental Consortium members should join the Workgroup that most closely matches their work and goals. Council staff will work with the Steering Committee to develop voting procedures to be used when consensus cannot be reached. Each workgroup should rank and prioritize their goals/strategies and select 2-3 top ideas. Particular attention should be given to ideas that are most important, practical, and most achievable. The Steering Committee is not bound to the workgroup rankings but should give strong consideration to such rankings. For purposes of voting, each consortium member may vote in only one Workgroup.

Workgroup and Steering Committee meetings will be open to the public. Individuals may attend these meetings and may choose to formalize their participation in the Consortium by signing a Partnership Agreement.

Land-of-Sky Regional Council will staff and facilitate the work of the Steering Committee. The Data and Analysis Team will collaborate with Council staff and provide support to both the Steering Committee and the Workgroups. Council staff will assist with initial set-up of Workgroups and will provide staff to those groups as needed, but the groups' work will be largely self-guided.

Western North Carolina Livable Communities Initiative
Governance Structure



Appendix B: Examples of Traditionally Under-Represented Communities

Examples of traditionally under-represented communities include, but are not limited to:

Elderly, disabled, Native American, African American, Hispanic, Ukrainian, persons living in poverty, illiterate, persons who are housing cost-burdened or have limited access to affordable workforce housing, individuals with chronic disease(s), youth, long-time residents (WNC natives), multi-generational and rural mountain landowners, small business owners, farmers, retired senior citizens on fixed incomes, transit-dependent citizens, and populations with limited access to health care, employment centers, education, or healthy foods.