



Risk & Resilience Strategic Planning and Community Engagement Sessions for Tennessee Communities

Request for Applications: March 8, 2019

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Purpose: To assist Tennessee communities in performing comprehensive community needs and vulnerability evaluation with a focus on risk-management, resilience planning, environmental and public health planning, smart growth, and sustainability; to support communities in identifying specific vulnerabilities and environmental priority areas; to assist in identifying resources and technical assistance to support a strategic action plan to address community vulnerabilities and priorities across multiple sectors; and to provide technical assistance and community engagement activities to support positive action in those priority areas.

Applications Due: May 3, 2019 (See page 4 for application requirements.)

Anticipated Selection Announcement: May 17, 2019

Implementation Timeframe: June 1, 2019-June 1, 2021

Offered By: The Office of Policy and Sustainable Practices (OPSP) in the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

OPSP Contact: Christina Ashie Guidry, Title VI/Environmental Justice Coordinator and Senior Policy Analyst, Christina.Guidry@tn.gov

Eligibility: All Tennessee communities are eligible. Priority will be given to communities classified as rural or small or located in counties classified as at-risk or distressed by the Appalachian Regional Commission with an interest in addressing community priorities through risk-management, resilience planning, and sustainability. More information on these classifications is at <https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/jobs-economic-development/openecd/tnecd-performance-metrics/openecd-long-term-objectives-quick-stats/distressed-counties.html>. Priority may also be given to communities that have engaged in some risk-management, resilience planning, environmental or public health planning, and/or sustainability efforts and are interested in building upon these efforts.

Support: Up to five communities will be selected to receive technical assistance over the project period, which includes:

- Bi-weekly planning calls with OPSP staff throughout the project period.
- A tailored half-day strategic planning session, organized and facilitated by OPSP, in the community with community leaders to identify community resilience, environmental, public health, energy, and/or smart growth needs, vulnerabilities and priorities.
- A report summarizing the strategic planning session, community vulnerabilities and priorities, and identification of available resources and technical assistance to support strategic action in community vulnerability and priority areas.
- A tailored full-day action plan workshop, organized and facilitated by OPSP with a:
 - morning session for community leaders in which technical experts and/or peer communities identify resources to support community risk management, resilience, and mitigation efforts in at least one community priority area (e.g. water quality, general hazard mitigation planning, or access to natural resources and open spaces), and
 - an afternoon session with a community engagement activity related to identified community priority areas that will educate and engage citizens (e.g., a watershed clean-up, home energy efficiency workshop, or backyard composting workshop).
- Periodic follow-up and technical assistance to support the community as it engages in action steps of its strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning and Community Engagement Sessions

OPSP will work with the community to understand existing conditions and identify community vulnerabilities, opportunities, and priorities through the perspectives of risk-management, resilience planning, public health, environmental stewardship, conservation, smart growth, and/or sustainability. OPSP will develop a comprehensive report that identifies resources – from technical assistance, to partnerships, to funding resources – available to support the community in taking action steps to pursue its priorities strategically. Finally, OPSP will work with the community to engage community leaders and residents in action steps and activities to support a community priority.

Expected Outcomes:

Participating communities will gain an understanding of a variety community strengths and challenges and identify priorities for building a more resilient, sustainable community based on community stakeholder input.

Participating communities will be able to evaluate a full range of potential resources to support strategic action steps to pursue their self-identified priorities.

Participating communities will receive technical assistance, peer mentoring, and community engagement activities related to at least one community priority to launch their strategic approach to community priorities.

Participating communities can then develop an implementation or strategic plan, utilizing the resources and information from their report, to support further strategic sustainable resilience measures in their communities.

OPSP will publicize participating communities' efforts, challenges, and successes and provide a case study for use by the community and to guide efforts of other communities.

Project Approach

The strategic planning and community engagement sessions will be a joint effort. OPSP will plan and facilitate the sessions in the participating community; the content of each session will be guided by community priorities as identified by community leaders based on input from their residents. Each community will identify up to three community priorities for follow-up engagement; OPSP will select up to two to address during the engagement session, depending on availability of resources, technical assistance, and peer mentors.

OPSP will cover the cost of food and beverages, event location fees, and travel reimbursement for technical experts and/or peer mentors during the planning sessions and will work with the community to identify appropriate locations to host the sessions.

Why Engage in this Opportunity?

Each year, Tennessee state and federal agencies award hundreds of millions of dollars to Tennessee communities to address outstanding community needs. Nevertheless, many communities are plagued by persistent and/or emerging problems related to basic infrastructure, environmental concerns, and residential quality of life. While there are many resources to support communities at the federal, state, and local level, identifying, understanding, and obtaining these resources is extremely challenging.

Research suggests that communities should consider vulnerabilities, risk-management, resilience, and sustainability as they plan for community development, growth, and preservation. Doing so will assist communities in examining strengths and challenges across all sectors of community life (government, education, economy, natural environment, business and industry, quality of life and citizen engagement, food and waste, health, and infrastructure)

to better support quality of life, economic growth, sustainability, and resilience in the face of unplanned events.

For small and rural communities, there are often compounding factors that limit access to such resources, such as lack of staffing or grant management expertise, lack of reliable broadband communication, and lack of underlying qualifications for funding. For example, as of 2018, nearly 50% of Tennessee counties lack a current, approved, and adopted hazard mitigation plan, which is a basic requirement for applying for many state-sponsored grants and loans such as pre-disaster mitigation funds. As a result, these communities often have less access to state and federal funds, programs, and technical assistance.

As Tennessee communities work to address community challenges, they often obtain grants or loans that address one aspect of a community priority without tapping into additional resources to address the full scope of the problem. For example, Community Z has prioritized challenges with its water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure and has qualified for a State Revolving Fund loan to build a new drinking water plant – a single part of its challenge. These strategic planning sessions would support Community Z’s priorities by closing the loop and identifying resources and technical expertise to address stormwater and wastewater, too.

Governor Lee’s Executive Order 01 requires all state agencies to identify the actions that it can take to support rural communities. TDEC’s OPSP is uniquely positioned to: 1) assist communities in performing an assessment of community strengths and challenges across all sectors of community life with a focus on risk-management, resilience planning, environmental stewardship, smart growth, and sustainability, 2) identify community priorities for action, 3) perform analysis and make recommendations on financial and technical resources available to the community, and 4) engage the community, including its residents, in taking action steps to pursue community priorities.

Community Application Criteria

To be considered, communities must submit an application to Christina Ashie Guidry via email: Christina.Guidry@tn.gov or mail: TDEC Office of Policy & Sustainable Practices, 312 Rosa L. Parks, Nashville, TN 37243 that includes the following information:

- A cover letter from elected or municipal officials expressing interest and designating 2-4 project planning leads for this project.
 - o A list of up to 15 proposed session participants, their responsibilities and titles, including, for example executive elected officials; directors of county/city programs and/or utilities: education, solid waste, water, transportation, health, etc; and other relevant stakeholders.

- A set of three or more proposed dates in fall or winter 2019 for the initial benchmarking strategy session;
- A copy of your community's hazard mitigation plan submitted to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, including its date of adoption and/or approval, *or* a statement that none exists at this time; and
- A narrative addressing the following prompts (2-3 pages)
 - o Please provide relevant background on your community and why it is interested in these sessions. This should also include information about specific environmental, public health, conservation, smart growth, or other areas of community concern and any data available related to these concerns; actions and information regarding community efforts related to risk-management, resilience, or sustainability; and actions and information related to persistent community challenges.
 - o Please explain any barriers your community has to implementation of strategic planning with consideration of risk-management, resilience, environment, public health, conservation, smart growth, and sustainability in your community, including barriers related to specific priorities that you would like to address in the planning process.
 - o Please explain types of expertise and/or areas of technical assistance anticipated to be of importance to your community in this process.
 - o Please provide a list of expected or desired short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of this process, including policy, regulatory, partnership, or legislative changes.