QuickSTARt Program Details

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The QuickSTARt Program is a one-year all inclusive package that provides training and technical assistance to local government staff as they complete their first baseline community sustainability assessment by pursuing certification under the STAR Community Rating System™, the nation’s leading framework and certification program for evaluating the sustainability of U.S. communities. The rating system provides a clear, data-driven approach to evaluating and tracking progress on economic, environmental, and social conditions, while the STAR certification process helps to identify gaps and prioritize investment.

The QuickSTARt Program recognizes that cities that have leadership buy-in, get organized upfront, and build a diverse team have great potential to realize transformation and catalyze action through the STAR certification process. The program is designed to accelerate the process of getting organized and achieving certification so that the community can quickly move through the assessment phase into implementation efforts.

Similar to the STAR Leadership Program, the QuickSTARt Program provides a high level of training and support to help a community to quickly align local plans, programs, and policies with the STAR framework, identify the evaluation measures available to the community, support focused data collection efforts, and enable the early identification of new policies and programs that may support STAR certification.

The QuickSTARt program includes extensive technical assistance throughout the program year via a dedicated STAR coordinator, remote trainings and support, and a 2-day in-person workshop. The goal of the workshop is to get buy-in and build understanding of the STAR framework and certification process and accelerate the data collection process to achieve certification within a 6-8 month timeline.

PROGRAM YEAR OUTLINE

The QuickSTARt program term runs for a full 12 months and can be started at any time of the year, pending STAR staff availability. Once the program year has commenced, it is expected that the community will complete STAR verification and certification within 12 months. A suggested timeline for
the program year is below. Exact dates and schedules can be adjusted to meet a desired community certification date.

- **Month 1** – Hold preliminary meeting to determine city goals and training needs; build local project team
- **Month 1-2** – Receive trainings via conference calls and webinars; align plans and programs with STAR framework using the crosswalk
- **Month 3-4** – Gather information and report on STAR outcome measures
- **Month 4-5** – Hold the QuickSTARt workshop
- **Month 5-8** – Finalize application and submit for certification
- **Month 8-10** – Go through verification process and achieve certification
- **Month 10-12** – Hold regular check-ins to support outreach and implementation efforts

**PROGRAM SUPPORT**

One of the key components of the QuickSTARt Program is the amount of technical assistance provided throughout the year. Each QuickSTARt community is assigned a dedicated STAR coordinator who is available to answer questions and provide support throughout the year. The community project team will have a monthly check-in phone call with the coordinator, to help strategize and manage the project year, build and train an internal STAR team, and/or answer technical content questions.

The STAR coordinator is available to review some submissions before submitting for verification, on a case-by-case basis. The coordinator will review objectives, outcomes, or actions as time allows, and will offer feedback on how to strengthen the submission. However, the coordinator will not be able to review your entire application prior to verification. If the city completes its application and submits for verification before the end of the program year, the STAR coordinator will be able to use remaining technical assistance hours to support community outreach and implementation efforts.

Other STAR staff will provide support at different times within the program year, for example, during the workshop. STAR staff will also support training and orientation events prior to the workshop.

**WORKSHOP DETAILS**

STAR Communities staff will work with the community to identify a customized agenda and date for the workshop, which is most effective if it takes place within the first half of the program year. The local project team will spend the first 3-4 months of the program getting oriented to the STAR framework and certification process via conference calls and remote webinars, doing preliminary research and alignment that will support a successful workshop, and planning the workshop.
The workshop agenda will be tailored to the needs of the community, but primary goals will be to get buy-in and build understanding of the STAR framework and certification process, and to accelerate the data collection process to achieve STAR certification within a 6-8 month timeline. Workshop goals may include:

• Increasing understanding of the full breadth of sustainability and giving participants a feeling of ownership of sustainability;
• Gathering data and sources for as many STAR action measures as possible;
• Identifying data sources for any STAR outcome measures that could not be found ahead of the workshop;
• Pinpointing future priority actions that will further local sustainability;
• Getting buy-in from mayor, city council, county board of commissioners and/or other elected officials or senior management; and
• Having a preliminary score and a significant portion of the community’s application for STAR certification completed by end of the workshop.

WORKSHOP EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATIONS

STAR staff will handle meeting design, material preparation, and facilitation. The community will provide meeting space, prepare a guest list and invite guests, and handle any on-the-ground logistics such as coffee or refreshments for participants. The community will provide meeting equipment such as a projector and easels and markers.

The workshop will be a working meeting. While no preparation is required, participants are expected to arrive ready to discuss programs and plans.

In advance of the workshop, the staff from the local government will complete an assessment of all quantitative outcome measures in the STAR Community Rating System and share this information with STAR staff. Performance on these measures will be used as the starting point for the goal area focus groups. Focus group attendees will run through the STAR actions in their area of expertise to identify local actions that meet STAR’s criteria. After the workshop, attendees will have approximately 2 weeks to return any pertinent information for the application.

Focus Group Sample Agenda:

• Introduction to STAR and purpose of workshop (Local staff and STAR; 15 minutes)
• Go over results for STAR outcomes as a group (Led by STAR; 30 minutes)
• Break into smaller groups/individuals based on expertise; fill out STAR action worksheets (assisted by core team; 30 minutes)
• Wrap up; what do we hope to get out of this process; next steps for attendees (Local staff and STAR; 15 minutes)
# SAMPLE WORKSHOP AGENDA

## DAY 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:00</td>
<td>Core Project Team Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-10:30</td>
<td><strong>Built Environment Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested attendees: Planning, Water Utility, Affordable Housing, Parks, Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45-12:15</td>
<td><strong>Climate &amp; Energy Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested attendees: Public Works, Energy department or utility, Sanitation</td>
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<td>12:15-1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00-2:00</td>
<td><strong>Economy &amp; Jobs Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested Attendees: Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, local BIDs, Workforce Development groups or community college</td>
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<td>2:15-4:00</td>
<td><strong>Equity &amp; Empowerment; Education, Arts &amp; Community Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested Attendees: Legal, Mayor’s office liaison, local school department, public library representative, homeless or human services department, arts council</td>
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<td>4:00-5:00</td>
<td>Core project team to summarize day’s findings, update point total</td>
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## DAY 2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:00</td>
<td>Coffee with Mayor, brief on project</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-10:15</td>
<td><strong>Health &amp; Safety Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested attendees: Mayors office liaison, Fire, Police, Emergency Management, Health Department, Parks or Activities director, Food Access Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30-11:45</td>
<td><strong>Natural Systems Focus Group</strong></td>
<td>Suggested attendees: Environment department, local land trust, water department, local agricultural extension</td>
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<td>11:45-1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00-3:00</td>
<td>Prep for Community Outreach/City Council Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00-4:00</td>
<td>Community Outreach Meeting or City Council Working Session</td>
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PRICING & PROCESS

The QuickSTARt program package has a flat fee of $10,000, which includes the following benefits:

- Meeting design and facilitation of a 2-day in-person workshop for local staff and partners, that may include:
  - Orientation and training sessions;
  - Presentations to help get buy-in from elected officials, senior management, and/or community partners;
  - Data collection workshops to begin gathering information for certification; and/or
  - Planning and strategy sessions with the core project team.
- Travel to the community by STAR staff for facilitation of the workshop;
- A dedicated STAR Communities coordinator to provide technical assistance throughout the program year;
- One year Full Access subscription to STAR tools and services;
- Verification of the community’s submission to receive an official STAR certification; and
- Recognition as a national sustainability leader.

If you are interested in participating in QuickSTARt program, please contact STAR Communities to set up a phone call to discuss your community’s suitability for the program and potential program start dates. Once a program timeline has been agreed on, STAR staff will develop a proposal/contract for the program and will invoice the community for the program fee. Once the contract and the invoice have been completed and returned to STAR, the program year may commence.

Contact:
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