



INFORMATIONAL KIT

Fall 2015 STAR Community Leadership Program



GET STARTED

on the path to sustainability today!

STAR Communities invites you to apply for the Fall 2015 Leadership STAR Community Program. We want you to be part of the growing network of cities, towns, and counties who are committed to improving quality of life for their residents, protecting the natural environment, and strengthening the local economy.

STAR Communities is a nonprofit organization that works to advance a national framework to evaluate and certify sustainable communities in North America. STAR's rating criteria are designed to assess communities' sustainability efforts in a clear and data-driven way.

PACKET CONTENTS

This packet is intended to provide basic information on the Leadership STAR Community Program. Go to our website at www.STARcommunities.org for more information and to download the application.

- Rating System Framework
- Participation in STAR
- Certification Benefits
- Leadership Program Overview
- Benefits
- Program Fees & Financial Assistance
- Application Deadlines and Next Steps

WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?

Every community is different, but the common goals are:

- a **Healthy Environment**
- a **Strong Economy**
- the **Well-Being** of the People in the Community

WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT FOR COMMUNITIES?

Integrated efforts at the local level have a powerful and positive effect on the quality of life and future of a community. Sustainability also makes a direct impact by using resources efficiently and sparking innovation.

THE STAR COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM HELPS LOCAL COMMUNITIES GET THERE!

The STAR Community Rating System is the nation's first comprehensive framework and certification program for evaluating local sustainability. STAR's comprehensive set of local environmental, economic, and social metrics was developed by more than 200 technical experts over the course of 4 years in order to drive continuous improvement. Local leaders use the rating system's metrics to assess their current level of sustainability, set targets for moving ahead, and measure progress along the way.

THE STAR COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM

Goal Areas & Objectives are rated and evaluated in the online system, helping local leaders set goals and measure progress across all areas.

Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Economy & Jobs	Education, Arts & Community	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Green Market Development	Community Cohesion	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health & Health System	Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Local Economy	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Environmental Justice	Emergency Prevention & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Historic Preservation	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Resource Efficient Buildings	Targeted Industry Development	Social & Cultural Diversity	Human Services	Indoor Air Quality	Water in the Environment
Public Spaces	Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure	Workforce Readiness		Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	Natural & Human Hazards	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	

ABOUT THE RATING SYSTEM

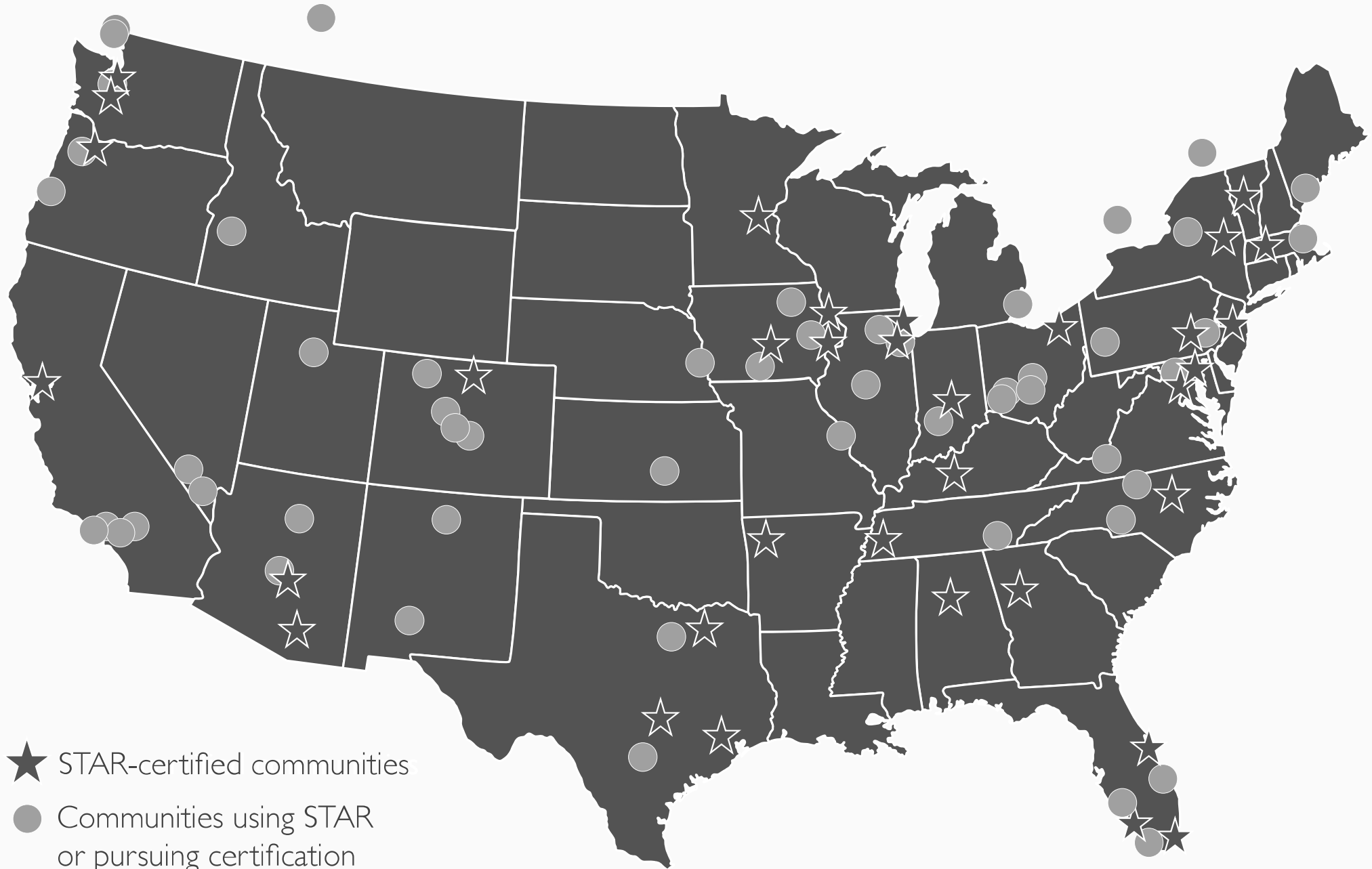
The STAR Community Rating System® (STAR) is the nation's **first comprehensive framework and certification program** for evaluating local sustainability, encompassing economic, environmental, and social performance measures.

Sustainability means different things to different people, so STAR provides a **clear, data-driven approach** to assessing communities' sustainability efforts. The STAR framework helps communities assess their efforts in seven key areas and define sustainability for themselves. This robust framework is necessary for communities to credibly track their progress toward overall sustainability objectives and to allow communities to compare progress with each other.

WHO DEVELOPED THE STAR COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM?

STAR was developed for local governments by local governments. Nearly 200 volunteers representing 50 cities and counties, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, national associations, universities, utilities, and private corporations contributed thousands of hours and diverse expertise to the development of the STAR Community Rating System.

NEARLY 100 COMMUNITIES ARE USING STAR...
THAT'S OVER 40 MILLION PEOPLE!



CERTIFICATION LEVELS

To drive continuous improvement, STAR Communities manages a certification program that allows communities to analyze their sustainability performance based upon the STAR Community Rating System®. To become certified, a community must submit an online application detailing how they meet the evaluation measures in the rating system, and then STAR performs a robust 3rd party verification. Certification lasts for 3 years.

Member STAR Community

A community that has expressed a commitment to the STAR Communities' mission and is using the STAR Community Rating System informally

Reporting STAR Community

Currently pursuing certification

Certified 3-STAR Community (200-399 points)

Recognized for sustainability leadership

Certified 4-STAR Community (400-599 points)

Recognized for national excellence

Certified 5-STAR Community (600+ points)

Recognized as top tier achiever in national sustainability



WHO IS STAR CERTIFIED?

Thirty-four communities have received a verified STAR Community Rating since November 2013.



5-STAR Community

- Baltimore, MD
- Northampton, MA
- Seattle, WA

4-STAR Community

- Austin, TX
- Dubuque, IA
- Plano, TX
- Tucson, AZ
- Broward County, FL
- Evanston, IL
- Portland, OR
- Washington, DC
- Burlington, VT
- Louisville, KY
- Raleigh, NC
- Davenport, IA
- Memphis, TN
- Tacoma, WA

3-STAR Community

- Albany, NY
- Des Moines, IA
- Indianapolis, IN
- Rosemount, MN
- Atlanta, GA
- El Cerrito, CA
- Lee County, FL
- Woodbridge, NJ
- Birmingham, AL
- Fayetteville, AR
- Palm Bay, FL
- Chandler, AZ
- Fort Collins, CO
- Park Forest, IL
- Cleveland, OH
- Houston, TX
- Reading, PA

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CERTIFICATION?

Communities report a host of benefits from achieving STAR Certification. Communities have used STAR to:

- Align local plans and priorities with a national sustainability framework
- Strengthen local metrics
- Demonstrate a commitment to data-driven performance management
- Increase transparency and accountability through public-facing reporting
- Identify gaps and prioritize future investment
- Gain competitive advantage and attract funding
- Catalyze action in implementing solutions and best practices for sustainability
- Communicate resilience and risk management to municipal bond agencies
- Integrate health and equity into existing sustainability or environmental efforts
- Strengthen civic, university, and governmental partnerships throughout the community
- Build and brand a culture of local sustainability
- Improve sustainability communication and education
- Celebrate local progress and achieve national recognition

WHAT ARE MAYORS SAYING?

“STAR lets us promote all the great things that we have done to make our community strong and resilient. It is positive feedback that lets our residents, taxpayers, businesses, investors, and community partners know that we are on the right track. The transparency and independence of the process builds confidence in our work.”

DAVID NARKEWICZ

Mayor, City of Northampton, MA
First Certified 5-STAR Community



“The STAR Community Rating System has been a powerful and valuable tool for our city to assess the progress of our sustainability efforts. It will also help us identify gaps and hold us accountable for improving the quality of life for our residents.”

MARILYN STRICKLAND

Mayor, City of Tacoma, WA
First Certified 4-STAR Community



ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Leadership STAR Community Program convenes a diverse mix of cities and counties dedicated to pursuing certification in the STAR Community Rating System. The program provides extensive support and training to help jurisdictions get organized then gather and report data for certification.

Communities gain a faster and more effective start to reporting and certification through structured education and support programs. Additionally, STAR staff is there to support the community throughout the entire data collection and verification process.

The Leadership Program is a transformative experience for communities – it provides a springboard for civic engagement, cross-agency coordination, integrated budgeting and performance management, partnerships with philanthropy, and economic development.



Spring 2014 Leadership Program Cohort at the kickoff training in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

The Leadership STAR Community Program was launched in 2014 and is based upon our successful pilot program. The Fall 2015 Program will be the 4th cohort of Leadership Communities. The program runs for one year and includes the following benefits:

- A 2-day in-person orientation workshop with other Leadership communities
- A dedicated STAR coordinator throughout the year
- One year of membership in the STAR network with STAR Member Community benefits
- Ongoing educational programs and networking opportunities with other Leadership communities
- A copy of the Technical Guide to the STAR Community Rating System
- Access to STAR's customized online Reporting Tool to store and track sustainability data
- Access to STAR's on-call content experts and advisers
- Basic STAR PR media services to assist in local storytelling
- Verification of the community's submission to receive an official STAR certification
- Recognition as a national sustainability leader

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Two staff or representatives from the community are invited to attend a 2-day in-person orientation at the start of the program year. STAR Communities recommends bringing one manager or elected official and one program staff, to provide both management and program staff with a full understanding of the program. At the orientation, you will...

- Get introduced to all STAR tools and support
- Learn how certified communities implemented STAR in their community
- Gain tips for getting organized and collecting data
- Attend sessions on leadership engagement, messaging, and philanthropy
- Have fun networking with other US cities and counties!



PROGRAM COSTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

The Leadership STAR Community Program is a 12-month full support program, with cohorts starting March 1st and September 1st of each year. Communities interested in the Leadership STAR Community Program must submit an application, which is currently available for download from our website at www.STARcommunities.org.

The cost of the one-year program is \$7,500 and begins September 1, 2015. Competitive scholarships are available to communities that demonstrate need and strategic vision (more information on the next page and in the application). It is expected that Leadership Communities will apply for STAR certification by the end of the program on August 31, 2016.

The program fee covers a year of STAR Membership benefits, attendance for two members of your team to the in-person training at the start of the program year, extensive technical assistance and support, and your community's verification fee (required for STAR Certification).

SCHOLARSHIP DETAILS

For Fall 2015, STAR Communities is pleased to make available 2 types of aid: financial assistance and capacity support. Communities may apply for both types of assistance.

In partnership with the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN), STAR Communities will make available a limited number of **need-based program fee scholarships** to communities demonstrating compelling resource constraints and need. These scholarships are to help communities that have the vision and capacity to achieve certification, yet lack financial resources to cover the program fee. For consideration, communities must be willing to leverage local philanthropic support during their participation in the Leadership STAR Community Program.

In partnership with The Summit Foundation and Global Green USA, STAR Communities will invite two communities to participate in the new **Quick Start Program** to accelerate the process of getting organized and achieve certification in a shorter timeline, to allow for more prioritization and alignment of efforts post-certification. The goal of the Quick Start Program is to support communities that seek additional capacity support to catalyze community action and transformation.

Additional information is available in the application.

DEADLINES & MILESTONES

The Leadership Program runs for one year, from September 2015 through August 2016. The schedule for the application process and the program year are below:

DATE	MILESTONE
June 15, 2015	Applications available on website
July 15, 2015	Priority deadline for financial assistance
July 31, 2015	Final deadline to apply
August 5, 2015	Decision announcements
August 28, 2015	Payment deadline
September 1, 2015	Program commences
September 21-22, 2015	Orientation & Training (TBD)
August 31, 2016	Program concludes – application for certification due

WHAT TO EXPECT

STAR staff will support Leadership Communities through all three phases of the program, to make sure that you get to certification.

GET STARTED

- You will start by announcing that you are pursuing STAR certification to get buy-in from leadership, staff, and stakeholders early.
- We will provide in-person orientation and training, how-to guides and regular support as you build your team and get started.

GATHER DATA

- The gathering and reporting phase is the longest stage in your pursuit of certification – lasting 6 months to a year.
- We will help you find the resources you need to be successful (like interns and partners) while offering technical support and trainings.

GET CERTIFIED

- Certification is the ultimate achievement in STAR. Once your data has been submitted and verified, you will be awarded a STAR level.
- We will provide you with a certification kit, assistance with STAR PR, and access to promotional items and recognition opportunities.

THE VALUE OF BENCHMARKING

"The STAR rating process gave us the framework for a deep dive sustainability assessment - to identify where we are strong and where there is more we can do. The assessment is also a great tool to engage our community partners around shared goals and opportunities for further action."

JILL SIMMONS

Director, Office of Sustainability & Environment, Seattle, WA
Certified 5-STAR Community



"We are proud to be recognized for sustainability leadership by STAR and are excited about the potential to benchmark our progress along with other cities working in urban sustainability. The City of Cleveland Office of Sustainability gained important feedback on both our successes and opportunities for improvement by participating in STAR."

JENITA MCGOWAN

Chief of Sustainability, City of Cleveland, OH
Certified 3-STAR Community

HOW TO APPLY

1. Review the STAR Communities website and the info kit to become familiar with the program and requirements.
2. Schedule an informal conversation with STAR to discuss your goals and ask questions (optional). Email info@starcommunities.org.
3. Download the application from the [website](#).
4. Fill out the application and return to info@starcommunities.org by July 15th, 2015 for priority consideration for financial assistance. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through July 31st, 2015.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

The STAR Community Rating System was designed for use by local (town, city, county) governments. While partnerships are encouraged, the governmental entity is the primary applicant for STAR certification. Other community partners, organizations, universities, consultants, and federal agencies can become STAR Affiliates to support STAR Communities' mission. See www.STARcommunities.org for more information.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

For questions or to schedule an informal call,
please contact us at:
(855) 890-STAR

Hilari Varnadore, Executive Director
hilari@starcommunities.org

Lacey Shaver, Manager, Leadership Program
lacey@starcommunities.org

