



STAR Program Overview

STAR (Sustainability Tool for Assessing & Rating Communities) is the **only** national certification tool for benchmarking a community-wide sustainability assessment and rating. Raleigh was selected to be one of the first 20 cities nationwide as a Leadership STAR Community. You can view the press release on the selection of the Leadership Cities [STAR leadership community](#). Local community leaders use STAR to assess their community’s sustainability, set targets for moving forward, and measure progress over time.

Released in October 2012, STAR represents a milestone in the national movement to create more livable communities for all. The rating system’s evaluation measures collectively define community-scale sustainability, and present a vision of how communities can become more healthy, inclusive, and prosperous across goal areas. The system’s goals and objectives provide a much-needed vocabulary and benchmark performance metrics that local governments and their communities can use to more effectively strategize and define their sustainability planning efforts.

The intent of the rating system is to help communities identify, validate, and support implementation of best practices to improve sustainable community conditions. There are 8 goal areas of performance metrics serving to benchmark the entire community (not just the city) from a comprehensive sustainability perspective. The goal areas are:

1. Built Environment
2. Climate & Energy
3. Economy & Jobs
4. Education, Arts & Community
5. Equity & Empowerment
6. Health & Safety
7. Natural Systems
8. Innovation

STAR will provide an excellent foundation for a broader assessment of our community. It also serves as an opportunity to communicate our strategic objectives and outcomes with our community partners.

The stated benefits of being identified as a Leadership STAR Community are:

- **Demonstrate commitment** to local sustainability
- **Receive national recognition** for leadership and achievements
- **Gain competitive advantage** for attracting economic development and funding
- **Improve transparency** and accountability and showcase results
- **Communicate long-term resiliency** and risk management to municipal bond agencies
- **Build and strengthen partnerships** within government and the community

As this STAR initiative is a very important and visible effort being launched by the city, and also involving the entire community, the Office of Sustainability looks forward to the opportunity to partner with you as we assess our community.

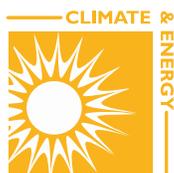
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STAR Timeline

October 2013	Received STAR staff briefing
November	Submitted STAR Application
December	Accepted as STAR Community
End of January 2014	STAR training – Florida
February	OoS STAR briefing
March	Identified Internal Partners
April	Internal partner meetings
	Identified External partners
May	External Partner meetings
	Assigned Goals/Objectives- OoS
June	Interns Started
July - December	Data gathering and input
<u>December 23, 2014</u>	<u>Submitted to STAR</u>
January 2015	STAR Review with Tansy
	Phone call with STAR (next steps, other community outcomes, and timing)
	Questions (review and re-submittal, per capita vs. growth, policy vs. culture/actions, \$ for next steps and analysis)
Mid Feb./March	Dept. head meetings (Planning, Neighborhoods, PU, and PRCR)
April 8	Department Head mtg. (slide deck)
April 21	Council Update/ Work Session (tentative)
April 22	Environmental Awards – STAR Announcement
May 5	Presentation to the City Council (Partner Recognition)

STAR's Objectives

Each of the rating system's 7 goal areas is supported by 5-7 Objectives. Objectives are the clear and desired outcome intended to move the community toward the broader sustainability goal. Below are the system's 44 Objectives, organized by Goal Area.

Table of STAR Goals and Objectives

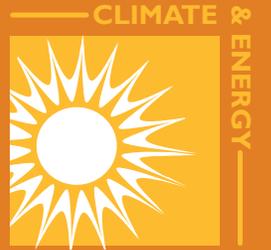
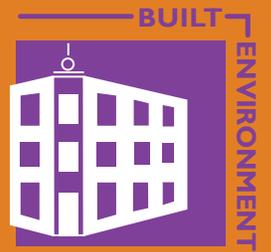
Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Economy & Jobs	Education, Arts & Community	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse 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	

STAR Community Rating System

Version 1.1 • January 2014



TECHNICAL GUIDE



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Incorporated in the District of Columbia in April 2012, STAR Communities advances a national framework for sustainable communities through delivery of standards and tools built by and for local governments and the communities they serve.

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Communities & STAR

The STAR Community Rating System is built by and for local governments and the communities they serve. Our program's success relies on the engagement of and evaluation by U.S. cities, towns and counties.



Pilot STAR Communities (2013)

Albany, NY	Davenport, IA	Montreal, QC	Seattle, WA
Atlanta, GA	Des Moines, IA	Northampton, MA	Tacoma, WA
Austin, TX	El Cerrito, CA	Portland, OR	Toronto, ON
Broward County, FL	Evanston, IL	Riverside, CA	Tucson, AZ
Calgary, AB	Fort Collins, CO	Rockingham County, NC	Victoria, BC
Chandler, AZ	Indianapolis, IN	Santa Fe, NM	Washington, DC
Chattanooga, TN	King County, WA	Santa Monica, CA	Woodbridge, NJ
Cleveland, OH	Lee County, FL	St. Louis, MO	

Leadership STAR Communities (2014)

Baltimore, MD	Dubuque, IA	Memphis/Shelby County, TN	Plano, TX
Birmingham, AL	Fayetteville, AR	Nederland, CO	Portland, ME
Burlington/Chittenden County, VT	Frederick, MD	Palm Bay, FL	Raleigh, NC
Charles City, IA	Houston, TX	Park Forest, IL	Redlands, CA
Denton, TX	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY	Phoenix, AZ	Rosemount, MN

Reporting STAR Communities (As of January 3, 2014)

Allegheny County, PA

Participating STAR Communities (As of January 3, 2014)

Blacksburg, VA

Bloomington, IN

Bonita Springs, FL

Boise, ID

Columbus, OH

Coos Bay Watershed, OR

Dayton, OH

Flagstaff, AZ

Hamilton, OH

Lakewood, CO

Madison County, NY

Omaha, NE

Orange County, FL

Philadelphia, PA

Salt Lake City, UT

Sarasota County, FL

Vancouver, BC

Funders and Affiliates

STAR Communities would like to acknowledge the commitment and support of our philanthropic partners, sponsors and STAR Affiliates.

The Kresge Foundation

Summit Foundation

Surdna Foundation

Arizona State University

Breckinridge Capital Advisors

City of Portland, OR

City of Santa Monica, CA

City of Vancouver, BC

District of Columbia

National League of Cities

Siemens Corporation

U.S. Department of Energy

U.S. Green Building Council

Urban Land Institute

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	7
Achieving Certification and Recognition	9
Framework of the Rating System	9
Understanding Points and Scores	12
Submittal Requirements: Evaluation Measures	14
Built Environment	16
BE-1: Ambient Noise & Light	17
BE-2: Community Water Systems	23
BE-3: Compact & Complete Communities	31
BE-4: Housing Affordability	45
BE-5: Infill & Redevelopment	53
BE-6: Public Spaces	60
BE-7: Transportation Choices	68
Climate & Energy	76
CE-1: Climate Adaptation	77
CE-2: Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	84
CE-3: Greening the Energy Supply	90
CE-4: Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	96
CE-5: Resource Efficient Buildings	102
CE-6: Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure	110
CE-7: Waste Minimization	116
Economy & Jobs	121
EJ-1: Business Retention & Development	122
EJ-2: Green Market Development	128
EJ-3: Local Economy	135
EJ-4: Quality Jobs & Living Wages	141
EJ-5: Targeted Industry Development	147
EJ-6: Workforce Readiness	152
Education, Arts & Community	158
EAC-1: Arts & Culture	159
EAC-2: Community Cohesion	165
EAC-3: Educational Opportunity & Attainment	172
EAC-4: Historic Preservation	179
EAC-5: Social & Cultural Diversity	186
U.S. Federal Agency Acronyms	333
STAR Glossary	334
Points Appendix	349
Equity & Empowerment	192
EE-1: Civic Engagement	193
EE-2: Civil & Human Rights	199
EE-3: Environmental Justice	204
EE-4: Equitable Services & Access	211
EE-5: Human Services	219
EE-6: Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	225
Health & Safety	232
HS-1: Active Living	233
HS-2: Community Health & Health System	241
HS-3: Emergency Prevention & Response	249
HS-4: Food Access & Nutrition	254
HS-5: Indoor Air Quality	263
HS-6: Natural & Human Hazards	268
HS-7: Safe Communities	274
Natural Systems	282
NS-1: Green Infrastructure	283
NS-2: Invasive Species	290
NS-3: Natural Resource Protection	296
NS-4: Outdoor Air Quality	303
NS-5: Water in the Environment	310
NS-6: Working Lands	316
Innovation & Process	321
IP-1: Best Practices & Processes	322
IP-2: Exemplary Performance	327
IP-3: Local Innovation	328
IP-4: Regional Priority & Collaboration	331

INTRODUCTION

The STAR Community Rating System (STAR) is the first national certification program to recognize sustainable communities. Local leaders use STAR to assess their sustainability, set targets for moving forward, and measure progress along the way.

Released in October 2012, STAR represents a milestone in the national movement to create more livable communities for all. The rating system's evaluation measures collectively define community-scale sustainability, and present a vision of how communities can become more healthy, inclusive, and prosperous across seven goal areas. The system's goals and objectives provide a much-needed vocabulary that local governments and their communities can use to more effectively strategize and define their sustainability planning efforts.

The intent of the rating system is to help communities identify, validate, and support implementation of best practices to improve sustainable community conditions. Built on the guiding principle of continuous improvement, STAR will evolve to remain the leading framework for local sustainability. There is recognition that the content of the rating system may change over time to embrace innovation, apply new research, or adapt to changing conditions in the field of community sustainability. All updates to the rating system will strive to create a consistent system that is both rigorous and accessible to local government applicants and their partners.

Over time, the program will build a research model that includes spatial, temporal, and level of effort details to expand the evidence base about the degree to which various actions advance sustainability conditions community-wide. This rigor and differentiation will allow STAR to expand national learning and drive ongoing improvements to sustainable community governance.

Purpose of the Technical Guide

This Technical Guide is intended to serve as a supplement to the STAR Community Rating System and companion to the STAR Online Reporting Tool. Communities engaged in formal data collection and reporting will find the rating system's rationale and methodology, calculations, data sources, and data submittal requirements in the Technical Guide. Readers may also come to the Technical Guide seeking best practices in order to implement solutions at the local level.

As a technical publication, the intended audiences are those engaged in sustainability at the city, town, or county level including local governments, universities, nonprofits, the private sector; regional, state or federal agencies, philanthropic institutions, and other community leaders.

Oversight and Evolution

The rating system was developed between 2008-2012 using an open, consensus-based process. Technical Advisory Committees comprised of experts from across the country determined scientifically valid, cost-effective ways of evaluating local government progress with oversight and guidance from a Steering Committee. After the rating system was released in 2012, the eight Technical Advisory Committees were consolidated into a 21-member Technical Advisory Group. In order to maintain the rating system's credibility, all substantive changes to STAR are approved by the Technical Advisory Group then sent to the Steering Committee for acceptance.

- **Steering Committee:** The governing body responsible for guiding the development of the STAR Community Rating System. The committee is charged with maintaining the rating system as a leadership tool, preserving its integrity, and evolving STAR using the consensus process in accordance with the mission, guiding principles, and strategic plan of STAR Communities.
- **Technical Advisory Group (TAG):** The purpose of the TAG is to enhance and, where necessary, clarify the STAR Community Rating System. The group maintains and advances the technical aspects of the existing STAR Community Rating System; continuously builds, improves and advances credit intents, requirements and guidance; upholds the technical rigor, fairness and transparency in the STAR Community Rating System development process; and holistically oversees, integrates, manages and envisions the technical aspects of the STAR Community Rating System.

Coordination with Companion Resources

The Technical Guide should be used in conjunction with the following resources:

- **STAR Crosswalk:** An Excel spreadsheet of STAR’s evaluation measures that communities can modify to determine alignment with existing sustainability plans, programs and policies. Many communities also use the spreadsheet to organize data sources, assign responsible parties for data collection, and manage internal workflow.
- **STAR Self-Assessment Checklist:** An interactive online checklist that communities can use to identify evaluation measures for which they expect to receive credit in the rating system. As boxes are checked, the Self-Assessment calculates a preliminary score to help communities determine the best approach to STAR certification or whether to pursue certification in the future.
- **STAR Online Reporting Tool:** The custom-built online platform that manages the community’s application for STAR certification. Applicant local governments upload and enter data to substantiate the community’s achievements and activities, which are then verified by STAR Communities in order to issue a final rating.

STAR Subscriptions

STAR was built by and for local governments and the communities they serve. While partnerships are encouraged, the governmental entity (e.g. town, city, or county) is the primary applicant in the rating system. Local governments access tools, publications and support by registering for one of three annual subscription packages. The subscriptions were developed with the needs of different types of communities in mind: from those who are just getting started to those who are ready to pursue certification.

Annual Subscription Packages	
Leadership STAR Community	Supports a cohort of communities as they get organized around the rating system and then collect and report their data in order to receive a certified STAR Community Rating. Leadership STAR Communities receive extensive access to staff and on-call experts, online tools, training programs, technical assistance, and other services associated with the rating system.
Reporting STAR Community	Designed for the community that is ready to have their sustainability efforts nationally recognized through a certification program. The Reporting STAR Community is organized and motivated and has been tracking sustainability metrics for some time. They also have a strong team of agency leaders and partners willing to help, and supportive elected leadership.
Participating STAR Community	Designed for the community who wants to assess their current conditions, set goals and priorities, and share a sustainability framework across agencies or with stakeholders. It is an introductory subscription developed to help communities get organized around STAR and determine whether certification is right for them.

The path to sustainability is different for every community and each unique place will approach the STAR Community Rating System in a different manner. Communities engage in STAR for a variety of reasons including to:

- **Demonstrate commitment** to local sustainability
- **Receive national recognition** for leadership and achievements
- **Gain competitive advantage** and attract funding
- **Improve transparency** and accountability and showcase results
- **Communicate resilience** and risk management to municipal bond agencies
- **Build and strengthen partnerships** within government and with community

ACHIEVING CERTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION

Once a community has documented their progress in the STAR Online Reporting Tool, they may submit for verification of their application. The verification team at STAR Communities reviews all applications for accuracy within 60 days of submission and issues an official STAR Community Rating based upon points achieved.

The number of points achieved in the rating system determines a community's certification or recognition level. There are three certification levels: 5-STAR Community, 4-STAR Community and 3-STAR Community and one recognition category: Reporting STAR Community.

Once certified, an official STAR Community Rating lasts three years. Applicants may re-submit an application at any time prior to the three-year mark to receive a new STAR Community Rating Level.

Certification Rating Levels	Point Range
5-STAR Community <i>Recognized as a top tier achiever in national sustainability</i>	600+
4-STAR Community <i>Recognized for sustainability leadership</i>	400-599
3-STAR Community <i>Recognized for sustainability leadership</i>	200-399
Reporting STAR Community <i>Currently pursuing certification</i>	<200

For ideas on how to leverage your STAR certification, align local plans with STAR, or integrate the rating system's metrics into annual reports or implementations plans, go to www.STARcommunities.org/communities. This page provides case studies and examples of how communities are leading the way and improving sustainability conditions using STAR.

FRAMEWORK OF THE RATING SYSTEM

The STAR framework, which integrates economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainability, provides communities with a menu-based system to customize their approach based on local conditions and priorities. Communities can pursue the most important or relevant objectives, addressing regional variability and differing priorities along the way.

The rating system is organized by goals, objectives, and evaluation measures; this design is intended to align with local government processes and standard practice. The structure features a set of components that reflect public sector mechanisms that are proven effective in advancing change. Terms are those commonly used by local governments and their community partners to communicate strategic objectives and desired outcomes.

Within each goal area is a series of objectives aimed at achieving community-level aspirations. Objectives are measured in two ways: through attainment of community level outcomes and/or completion of local actions that are essential to reaching the outcomes. These evaluation measures provide the avenue for communities to achieve credit in the rating system.

Below are terms and definitions associated with the STAR framework.

Key Terms and Definitions	
Goal	Desired state or condition that a jurisdiction intends to achieve
Objective	A clear, desired outcome intended to move the community toward the broader goal
Purpose	Statement to clarify relevance, to provide context, and communicate the desired Outcome(s)
Evaluation Measure	Qualitative or quantitative, using relative or absolute metrics
Community Level Outcome	Measurable, condition-level indicators that depict a community's progress toward a preferred state or condition as suggested by the STAR Objective
Local Action	Range of decisions and investments that a community can make, or the activities that they can engage in, that are essential to achieving the desired Outcome(s)

STAR's Goal Areas

Built Environment: *Achieve livability, choice, and access for all where people live, work, and play*

Climate & Energy: *Reduce climate impacts through adaptation and mitigation efforts and increase resource efficiency*

Economy & Jobs: *Create equitably shared prosperity and access to quality jobs*

Education, Arts & Community: *Empower vibrant, educated, connected, and diverse communities*

Equity & Empowerment: *Ensure equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity for all citizens*

Health & Safety: *Strengthen communities to be healthy, resilient and safe places for residents and businesses*

Natural Systems: *Protect and restore the natural resource base upon which life depends*

An eighth category, **Innovation & Process**, supports the evolution of sustainability practice by recognizing best practices and processes, exemplary performance, innovation, and collaboration in areas of regional priority.

Evaluation Measures

As noted, STAR Objectives are achieved through attainment of two types of evaluation measures: Community Level Outcomes and Local Actions. Outcomes are measurable condition-level indicators that depict a community's progress toward a preferred state or condition within the STAR Objective it supports. Outcomes are represented as trend lines, targets, or thresholds in the rating system.

Generally, STAR awards credit to county applicants if they are achieving Outcome measures at the county-scale. However, recognizing the challenges faced by county applicants as a result of having multiple municipalities within their boundaries, there are two exceptions to this rule. The first exception is based on the understanding that data collection would be unreasonably burdensome. The second exception is when the Technical Guide provides explicit instructions that reporting at the county scale is not required.

Local Actions describe the range of decisions and investments that a local government or community can make, or the activities that they can engage in, that are essential to achieving desired Outcomes. Local Actions in the rating system focus on the key interventions that move the needle towards STAR's identified Outcomes.

Since many public, private, and non-profit organizations within the community contribute towards advancing sustainability goals, the rating system recognizes these efforts, not only those of the local government. The rating system awards credit for Local Actions performed by community actors other than the applicant local government, provided that the applicant demonstrates that the activities have had a significant, positive impact on progress towards achieving the desired Outcome(s) for the community as a whole.

Action Types	
Education and Outreach	<i>Preparatory</i>
Plan Development	
Policy and Code Adjustment	
Partnerships and Collaboration	
Practice Improvements	
Inventory, Assessment or Survey	
Enforcement and Incentives	<i>Implementation</i>
Programs and Services	
Facilities and Infrastructure Improvements	

There are nine defined Action Types in the rating system. Preparatory Actions are foundational steps that a community should take first to assess the community's needs and trends, identify and execute policy and regulatory changes, and strengthen partnerships and collaborations in order to effectively deploy resources and investments.

Implementation Actions are the programs and services, enforcement and incentive mechanisms, and infrastructure investments a community makes in order to efficiently and equitably move the needle towards the desired Outcomes.

Technical advisors, staff, and other stakeholders regularly review evaluation measures to determine whether they are relevant, feasible, systemic, timely, reliable and valid. Other criteria for inclusion in the rating system include alignment with the STAR Guiding Principles.

UNDERSTANDING POINTS AND SCORES

The methodology behind STAR's points and scores acknowledges the integrated nature of the system's sustainability Goal Areas and Objectives and the complex relationship between Local Actions and Community Level Outcomes. While this section aims to provide an overview of points and scores, refer to the Technical Guide's Points Appendix for a more complete description of the design assumptions, point allocations and weightings.

It is recommended that applicants utilize the STAR Self-Assessment Checklist to estimate their preliminary score and certification level before beginning to enter data; the checklist provides an interactive score based on the selection of individual evaluation measures.

Weighting of Goal Areas

STAR's seven Goal Areas serve as the foundation of the system's interconnected, triple bottom line approach to sustainability. There are currently no universally accepted standards for rating one sustainability goal as of greater importance or value than any other; therefore, with one exception, STAR's Goal Areas are equally weighted at 100 points each. Education, Arts & Community is valued at 70 points because it has a fewer number of STAR Objectives overall.

Goal Area	Points Available
Built Environment	100
Climate & Energy	100
Economy & Jobs	100
Education, Arts & Community	70
Equity & Empowerment	100
Health & Safety	100
Natural Systems	100

Achieving Points within STAR Objectives

Within each Goal Area are between 5 and 7 Objectives; each has a total point value between 5 and 20 points. Objectives are assigned a total point value based on their impact on achieving community sustainability as well as impact towards meeting the STAR Goal Area that it is situated beneath.

Applicants accumulate points in the rating system through achievement of Objectives. Within each Objective, there are three paths to achieving the total points available: communities can complete Community Level Outcomes, Local Actions or a combination of the two types of evaluation measures.

Communities that meet the Outcome's threshold, target, or trend line requirement or, in some cases, demonstrate incremental progress will achieve a proportion of the total points available. Partial credit is available where indicated. Point values for Outcomes are determined by the supporting STAR Objective, the Outcome's strength as a standard (e.g. national standard threshold, standard target for trend, STAR set threshold, locally set threshold, locally set trend, or general trend) and its data sources and data quality (e.g. outside data set, standardized collection, or locally collected).

In each Objective, the Technical Guide distinguishes whether 100% or 70% of points are available through Outcomes. In Objectives where the Outcomes represent national or leadership standards, communities can achieve 100% of the points available without submitting documentation on Local Actions. In other Objectives where the Outcomes reflect a local or general threshold or trend, a community can achieve up to 70% of an Objective's total points available and must supplement the remaining points with Actions.

Finally, communities have the opportunity to accumulate points for the Local Actions that they complete. The rating system assigns higher point values to implementation-based actions than those that are preparatory in nature due to dedication of resources and impact on sustainability conditions. Actions will be evaluated over time and may be replaced or adjusted to align with the program's growing evidence base about which actions have the strongest influence.

Innovation & Process Category

Local government applicants may find that certain areas of the rating system are more difficult to achieve or may not apply given differences in geography, climate, jurisdictional control or other factors. The Innovation & Process credit category is a place to look for "extra credit" to supplement those areas of the system that were unattainable, difficult, or not a local priority.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS: EVALUATION MEASURES

Community Level Outcomes

In order to receive credit for STAR Outcomes, the community must submit the required documentation described in the guidance section of the relevant Objective. In many cases, the documentation is a STAR-provided Excel spreadsheet, which can be downloaded from the respective entry page in the Online Reporting Tool.

Local Actions

All Local Actions in STAR fit into one of nine Action Types. The submittal requirements for each Action Type are consistent throughout the system and are described below:

- **Education and Outreach:** For verification, identify 3 different types of education and outreach efforts conducted over the past 3 years, which can include events, classes, or workshops; a website; print materials; electronic media; social media; or other. For each, provide the title (and date for events, classes, or workshops), a brief description, and a link or copy if applicable.
- **Plan Development:** For verification, provide the plan title; a link to or copy of the plan; the year adopted or last updated with a description of how the plan is still used if more than 3 years old; a description of the development process and stakeholders involved; vision statement; key recommendations; strategy for implementation; and whether the plan has quantifiable targets (yes/no).
- **Policy and Code Adjustment:** For verification, provide the title and a link to or copy of the policy or code requirement; a description of the compelling characteristics that advance progress towards the desired Outcome(s); whether there was public engagement (yes/no); and the year adopted or last updated. *Note: Policy statements that appear in long-range plans (e.g. comprehensive plans) do NOT count for credit under the Policy and Code Adjustment Action Type.*
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** For verification, identify the type of collaboration (formal partnership, appointed committee, or community collaboration); the name of the partnership or committee and a description of each partner's contribution or the committee's criteria for selection; a link to or documentation of the partnership or committee's work; year established; key accomplishments in the past 3 years; and a description of the local government's financial contribution and/or elected official/staff time dedicated in the past 3 years.
- **Practice Improvements:** For verification, describe the practice improvement; key accomplishments in the past 3 years; and provide a link to or copy of the annual report if applicable.
- **Inventory, Assessment or Survey:** For verification, identify the type of analysis (map, database, report, survey, or other) and provide the title; a description of key findings, and a link to or copy of the inventory, assessment, or survey.
- **Enforcement and Incentives:** (1) Enforcement: For verification, provide the unique verification specified in the Technical Guide and Online Reporting Tool; a description of the enforcement action and parties responsible; a description of the enforcement mechanism and process; a description of the compelling characteristics that advance progress towards the desired Outcome(s); and the year created or implemented. (2) Incentives: For verification, provide the unique verification; a link to or copy of the incentive; a description of the compelling characteristics that advance progress towards the desired Outcome(s); and the year created or implemented.
- **Programs and Services:** For verification, provide the name and a brief description of the program or service; the unique verification specified in the Technical Guide and Online Reporting Tool; a description of the compelling characteristics that advance progress towards the desired Outcome(s); and the year created or implemented.
- **Facility and Infrastructure Improvements:** For verification, provide the unique verification specified in the Technical Guide and Online Reporting Tool; a description of the compelling characteristics that advance progress towards the desired Outcome(s); and the funding invested in the past 3 years.