



Tool Kit for Professional Development of Local Government Sustainability Directors

This tool kit contains four tools that USDN members can use to figure out what competencies—skills and knowledge—they may need and want to develop for success in their jobs and how they might do so. The tools were developed out of research by the USDN Professional Development Working Group, and the complete tool kit can be found on O-H Community Partners’ website at <http://www.ohcommunitypartners.com/clients/>. To download, please scroll down the alphabetical list of clients and click on Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

Tool #1 – Sustainability Directors Job Description. Drawing on a 2011 survey of USDN members, this provides a composite description of Job Definition, Reporting Structure, Examples of Work, Required Education and Abilities, and Salary Range.

Tool #2 – The Evolution of Local Sustainability Offices. Based on 2010 USDN research, this multi-step tool allows users to better understand the progress of their organizations through the four stages of sustainability institutionalization in each of four functional areas. By tracking their accomplishments through an activities checklist, users can anticipate activities that lay ahead based on knowledge of future stages.

Tool #3 – Self Assessment of Competencies for Sustainability Directors. In the 2011 USDN survey, ten process skills and sixteen content knowledge areas were identified by sustainability directors as competences needed to perform their jobs. This self assessment tool, which builds on a time management framework originally developed by Steven Covey, provides users with a way to focus on the professional development opportunities that will have the most impact. For each skill and knowledge area, the tool requires three inputs from the user 1) the user’s existing ability, 2) the importance of that skill or knowledge area to the user’s position, and 3) the urgency of the user’s need for professional development in that skill or knowledge area. Based on those three factors, the tool generates a menu of suggested professional development delivery options for each competency. Users can further prioritize by filtering results based on the three inputs: ability, importance, and urgency.

Tool #4 – Directory of Sustainability Professional Development Providers. This directory tool was developed using a USDN 2011 professional development training market scan of the sustainability field, and includes nearly 200 nonprofit, academic, government, and for-profit providers. Users can browse the tool using filters for one or multiple fields, including geography, provider type, skills and knowledge areas covered, as well as delivery methods. Alternatively, the output of the self-assessment tool (Tool #3 above) can be used as a strategic guide; user’s can conduct a more strategic search for providers based on the menu of suggested professional development delivery models for each desired skill and knowledge area.

Potential Next Steps. Although these tools are designed for use by individual USDN members, they can also provide a starting point for efforts to professionalize local government sustainability leadership. They can be used, for example, to help create competency and performance standards for sustainability directors, identify a “core curriculum” of skills/knowledge every sustainability director should have, or generate customer ratings of provider and product/service quality. A more evolved online version of this toolkit could provide users with even more sophisticated ways to determine their professional development needs and providers, and could also build an ongoing database about professional development in the field.