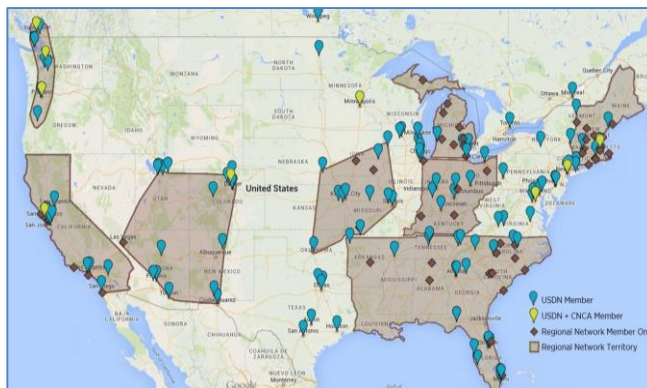


Scaling USDN Member Innovations through Regional Networks

Regional networks are exploring innovations in their areas, including community-based social marketing, the role of local government in urban agriculture, and climate preparedness and adaption.

The USDN Innovation Fund continues to test regional networks of sustainability directors as dissemination tools for USDN grant products by investing in Regional Network grants. Currently, there are 159 participants in eight regional networks, including 67 that are not USDN members. The map depicts the span of existing regional network activities. Additional networks are affiliating with USDN through a 2015-16 Regional Networks Pilot Program.



The intent of this grant opportunity is to help regional networks test methods for dissemination and multi-city adoption of Innovation Fund products, while building the capacity and strength of the regional networks. To meet this dual goal, regional network teams combed through the [library of Innovation Fund products](#) until they landed on an innovation that could help move their network forward.

In total, the fund awarded \$68,278 for projects in seven regions. Below are summaries of the projects these networks created to disseminate USDN innovations and build capacity in their networks. Several networks chose to focus on the same innovation products: urban agriculture and community based social marketing. In each summary title is a link to the original Innovation Fund Product the network is disseminating or adopting.

Urban Agriculture

Heartland Network: \$5,863 for Dissemination of the [Urban Agriculture Scan](#): By examining the Urban Ag Scan in an interactive workshop, network members are testing the role local governments should play in the development of urban agriculture. In order to disseminate these best practices, participants are designing a checklist that can be used to identify opportunities for local governments to advance the community's goals, including making policy improvements, providing technical assistance, and assisting with critical access to water. Each participant will identify next steps for their local government, and a summary of learnings and anticipated actions will be compiled by the project lead and shared with USDN.

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (OKI) Network: \$6,000 Dissemination of the [Urban Agriculture Scan](#): The OKI Network is disseminating information about Urban Ag during a two day meeting in the fall of 2015. Cincinnati is hosting this meeting and extending invitations to other USDN and non-USDN members in the region. In addition, the network will be able to utilize the experience as a stepping stone for participation in the 2016 Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit (MWRSS). The 2015 MWRSS was attended by over 300 people and included 5 OKI regional network members as presenters. It is anticipated that the 2016 MWRSS will have panels focused on urban agriculture, during which OKI members can disseminate best practices with key stakeholders from many regional network cities and partner organizations.

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Fostering Sustainable Behavior

Green Cities California (GCC): \$14,415 for Adoption of [Community Based Social Marketing Programs](#) for Water Conservation: In January 2014, Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency and called on Californians to reduce their water usage by 20%. In April 2015, Executive Order B-29-15 continues the State of Emergency and mandates a 25% reduction. To date, conservation efforts have fallen short of the governor's target, despite the fact that a majority of Californians believe that there is a "serious water shortage." The GCC project is developing a community-based social marketing (CBSM) campaign designed to strengthen the broad conservation messages offered by the various water agencies.

Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN): \$15,000 for Adoption of the [Community Based Social Marketing Methodology](#) and Project Implementation: In many communities in the southeast United States, there is often an absence of political will to tackle sustainability issues on a large scale. In the face of this challenge, individual behavior change is an important tool to facilitate positive change around sustainability issues. SSDN members are working together to develop a 12-month "Education to Execution" Community Based Social Marketing Workshop Series focused on fostering sustainable behavior. This project will include: an in-person workshop, five workshop webinars, and 6 peer learning calls. As a first-of-its-kind program in the SSDN network, it will be designed to guide the group in real-time as the participating communities plan, implement, and evaluate a CBSM campaign for their specific municipality.

New England Municipal Sustainability Network: \$15,000 for Dissemination of the [Rent Rocket Tool](#): This project is allowing members of the New England network to adopt "Rent Rocket" tool in their region. Rent Rocket is a USDN funded prototype online tool to help renters assess housing options based on a variety of factors, including sustainability. Still in early stages of deployment, Rent Rocket has already been featured in national reports and [journals](#) as a prospective and innovative way to foster sustainable behavior, reduce energy use, and improve sustainability related quality of life issues for renters. The tool also helps landlords grasp the value of sustainability investments as a marketable asset and share their sustainability achievements.

Climate Change Preparedness and Adaptation

Michigan Green Cities Network: \$6,000 for Dissemination of the [Green Cities California Adaptation Planning in Regions Process](#): Michigan Green Communities is working to accelerate climate resiliency at the local level through a face-to-face convening that is focused around effective roles for local governments in regional climate resiliency efforts. To do this, they will replicate a regional planning approach successfully implemented by their peer regional network, Green Cities California.

Western Adaptation Alliance (WAA): \$6,000 for Dissemination of Lessons for Advancing Adaptation to Climate Change Regionally: This project is training key representatives from WAA member cities and several additional Phoenix Metropolitan Area municipalities to utilize the project tools, including the database, templates, and communication tools. These tools provide critical support for climate change communication efforts, which are often hampered by political agendas in the Intermountain Southwest United States. This dissemination will take place through a two-day workshop. This project is developing train-the-trainer materials, including several webinar and podcast products, to inform WAA members and partners who are not able participate in this workshop.