

USDN Peer Learning Exchange Grant Program 2017 Annual Report

History

The USDN Peer Learning Exchange program was launched in 2013 and has received support from the Summit Foundation and The JPB Foundation. The grant program is designed to support USDN members to meet in person with their peers to learn and share together about one or more practices, policies, or programs.

Through the program, members convene for:

- [In-Depth Exchanges](#)
- [Best Practice Disseminations](#)
- [Peer Reviews](#)

A volunteer committee of USDN members has guided the evolution of this grant program and manages the selection process. Proposals are solicited through an RFP process, which is launched every three months, in order to fund exchanges as timely topics arise.

2017 Grant Program

2017 USDN Peer Learning Exchange Committee Members:

- Lisa LaRocque; Las Cruces NM, *co-chair*
- Jennifer Green; Burlington VT, *co-chair*
- Jenna Tatum; New York City NY
- Kristopher Stenger; Winter Park, FL
- Peter Nierengarten; Fayetteville AR
- Robyn Eason, West Hollywood CA

As of December 2017, the USDN Peer Learning Exchange grant program has awarded nearly \$176,000 to fund 43 exchanges, with a total of 199 participating USDN member communities. 64% of members have collaborated on proposals through its first five years, even as USDN membership has grown significantly.

In 2017, 81% of members rated the USDN Peer Learning Exchange grant program as high value. Its value was second only to the USDN Annual Meeting, which has consistently been the most valuable USDN activity with over 95% rating it as high value annually.

Example Exchange

In July 2017, sustainability staff from Chattanooga, Huntsville, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville convened alongside C-suite representatives from local and regional electric utilities serving each city. The participating members represented the five largest cities served by Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the nation's largest public power utility. The exchange enabled in-depth exchange between city sustainability officials and regional utility partners around four high-priority sustainability topics: (1) Energy Efficiency & Equity, (2) Electric

Vehicles & Battery Storage, (3) Solar & Distributed Generation, and (4) Grid Interoperability & Resilience.

This was a unique opportunity for cities to work at the regional scale on sustainability priorities with the utility. As municipal sustainability programs in the region mature and constituents demand sustainability progress from their elected leaders, cities are increasingly becoming leading voices on topics like renewable energy and efficiency. One participant noted, *“The USDN Peer Exchange grant opportunity has immeasurably strengthened the relationship between sustainability directors and utility decision makers within the TVA Service Territory. As a result of our convening, municipal sustainability staff have been identified as unique and important stakeholders (and allies!) for utilities as they advance sustainable energy priorities.”*

2017 Grants

In 2017, USDN Peer Learning Exchange grant program made over \$50,000 in grants to support 9 in-person exchanges for participants from 42 member communities:

- Knoxville TN received \$6,752 to convene with three other cities and representatives of the Tennessee Valley Authority on **utility energy supply and demand** opportunities.
- Ithaca NY received \$4,523 to convene with four other cities on **green building** policies.
- Louisville KY received \$3,677 to convene with other cities in the region to learn about **green business and energy challenge** programs, including a model program developed through the USDN Innovation Fund.
- Fort Collins CO received \$6,434 to host three cities interested in replicating their **One Planet employee engagement** program.
- Dubuque IA received \$3,313 to host fellow cities in the Heartland Network for a side event at the Sustainable Dubuque conference about **employee engagement programs**, including the Fort Collins program (see above).
- San Jose CA received \$2,444 to host four other cities to discuss responding to **illegal dumping** in their communities.
- Edmonton AB received \$7,000 to convene fellow Canadian communities in Toronto to learn about their **innovation centres** program.
- Boulder CO received \$5,490 to learn about Burlington’s **zero energy mobile homes** program.
- Alexandria VA received \$6,994 to host other cities in Virginia to learn more about **solar energy** programs.

Follow up reports for these and all previous USDN Peer Learning Exchanges are available to USDN members on the USDN.org website [here](#).

