



Municipal Sustainability Planning Initiative – Phase 4

Project Description

Introduction

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) was successful in its proposal to Alberta's Rural Development Fund, for funding in the amount of \$1.48 million.

AUMA's Municipal Sustainability Planning Initiative Phase 4 will arm rural communities with the skills and knowledge they need to develop effective municipal sustainability plans. These plans will maximize available resources and blueprint actions to be taken to move a community in its desired direction.

Several learning tools, training sessions and pilots have already been developed, and Phase 4 will be used to build upon earlier work and generate sufficient capacity for communities to build their own plans. Other partners include Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Municipal Affairs and towns and cities participating in this project.

Expected results include:

- Increased ability of rural communities to plan and implement sustainable programs in key areas like leadership and development.
- Better understanding among elected officials and municipal staff of the connection between social, cultural, economic, environment and governance aspects of sustainability
- Creation of more rural community municipal sustainability plans.
- Knowledge transfer from one community to another.

Project Description

The AUMA is a strong advocate of municipal sustainability planning and recommends that municipalities take a broad view of sustainability by developing a comprehensive long-term plan that includes and integrates the five dimensions of sustainability (social, cultural, environmental, economic, and governance).

Since 2005, AUMA has taken several actions to support municipalities in moving forward with municipal sustainability planning. These phases have included a President's Summit on Sustainability, the development of a comprehensive guide on municipal sustainability planning, development of a website, MSP training and networking events, and a year-long pilot project with five communities that are going through the MSP process as outlined in the resources. Their challenges, lessons learned and successes will be shared at the MSP Conference in 2008.

From the experience of pilot communities and others, AUMA has found that many communities have a desire to create a long-term vision for their community and strategically develop proactive steps to reach the communities desired future. Unfortunately a lack of human capacity creates barriers to communities moving forward. As planning for long-term sustainability is a new concept, many communities lack knowledge of what sustainability is, how to integrate the different dimensions of sustainability, how to look at their community's current reality, how to organize an effective public consultation process, and how to develop a plan that strategically creates the future they want. Additionally, Alberta's economic fortune has resulted in a labour shortage in all sectors, and municipal governments often find they can only allocate human resources to deal with immediately pressing matters.

The focus of Phase 4 of the Municipal Sustainability Planning Initiative is to build on the foundation of the earlier phases and create the human capacity required to allow communities to create and implement effective municipal sustainability plans.

The project will include the engagement of 8 locally-located Sustainability Coordinators, each working intensively with Alberta communities to develop a Municipal Sustainability Plan. The project will also include a Provincial Coordinator that will provide provincial support, direction and knowledge sharing between communities. They will also plan and coordinate the development and delivery of provincial learning resources and events. Alberta communities will be invited to apply to the program. Through a competitive process, up to 16 Municipal Sustainability Plans will be created. All municipalities in Alberta will be eligible to apply.

Project Vision, Goals and Strategies

Vision

Alberta municipalities will create long-term sustainability and vibrancy in their communities through an effective, inclusive and integrated municipal sustainability planning process and implementation of the municipal sustainability plan. Implementation of these plans will contribute to quality of life in Alberta communities.

Goals and Strategies

1. To build capacity among communities to develop and implement a municipal sustainability plan (MSP).
2. To enhance adoption of municipal sustainability planning by increasing knowledge of and motivation to undergo municipal sustainability planning on a provincial basis.
3. To create a strong foundation for municipal sustainability planning for communities into the future.

Partners

Alberta's Rural Development Fund is the keystone funding partner for AUMA's MSP Initiative Phase 4. Alberta Employment Industry and Immigration has committed funding to the project, and AUMA is in favorable discussion with two other provincial Ministries. The municipal governments selected to be part of the MSP Phase 4 project will be required to contribute office space for local coordinators, and allocate funding toward the project. These requirements will be clearly outlined in the application materials that will be provided to Alberta municipalities.