

The New Standard for Sustainability

The STAR Community Index™ (STAR) is a pioneering, strategic planning and performance management system that will offer local governments a road map for improving community sustainability. STAR helps communities address their interconnected concerns -- economic, environmental and social.

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), National League of Cities (NLC) and the Center for American Progress (CAP) have established a partnership to develop STAR with the goal of launching this tool in 2012.

>> [STAR Overview Presentation: Advancing Livable & Sustainable Communities \(pdf\)](#)

Why STAR Is Groundbreaking

STAR uniquely combines:

- **a framework for sustainability** that presents a vision of how communities can become more healthy, prosperous and inclusive
- **goals and performance measures** that are clear, consistent, and easily accessible, enabling cities and counties to more easily track their performance over time
- **a rating system** that drives continuous improvement and fosters competition in advancing community health, prosperity and inclusion
- **an online performance management tool** that gathers, organizes, analyzes, and presents information required to meet sustainability goals

Built by and for Local Governments

STAR's ambitious vision is primed for success thanks to the unprecedented collaboration involved in its creation, with more than 160 volunteers representing more than 50 cities and counties, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, national associations, universities, utilities, and private corporations.

These volunteers contribute thousands of hours each year, bring a diversity of perspectives and expertise, and provide a formidable brain trust for informing both the structure and content of the STAR system. This level of local government engagement has built a constituency of early adopters that will help provide fertile ground on which STAR can grow once established.

STAR Sustainability Goals and Guiding Principles

The STAR Community Index Sustainability Goals and Guiding Principles represents a milestone in the national movement to create more sustainable, livable communities. The Goals set a new national standard, and serve as an invaluable resource for local governments.

A Major Milestone

These 81 sustainability goals and 10 guiding principles collectively define community-scale sustainability.

The Goals provide a much-needed vocabulary that local governments and their communities can use to

The Goals and Guiding Principles also form the foundation of the forthcoming STAR Community Index, a

Get the Goals

how to use them (and learn about the STAR development process), download our report, released in October 2011.

[Download Now \(pdf\)](#)

Why Communities Need Defined Goals—and STAR

For too long, community sustainability has been a nebulous concept with competing definitions and frameworks. There has never been a national standard by which to measure sustainability performance (e.g., economic prosperity, health and safety, climate protection, etc.) at the municipal or county scale. Establishing these Goals and Guiding Principles is the first giant step toward addressing this critical need, and giving local governments the tools to accelerate their efforts and achieve greater success.

This milestone is the product of thousands of volunteer hours, and the engagement of more than 160 sustainability experts and stakeholders from broad disciplines using a collaborative and consensus-based process, drawn from government, the nonprofit and private sectors, and academia.

How to Use the Goals

The STAR Sustainability Goals and Guiding Principles are an invaluable resource for local governments and community stakeholders working to:

- create or revise a sustainability plan
- conduct a sustainability assessment
- establish local sustainability priorities
- focus ongoing sustainability initiatives

You can use the goals document as a framework in combination with ICLEI's Five Milestones for Sustainability. By aligning your local priorities with STAR's framework now, your community will be primed to utilize the full STAR performance management system when it is released in early 2012.

Five Milestones for Sustainability

ICLEI's Five Milestones provide a simple, standardized means of assessing sustainability challenges, establishing goals, developing and implementing a plan, and monitoring, measuring and reporting performance.

The methodology underlying the Five Milestones for Sustainability is based on the Five Milestones for Climate Mitigation and involves a more broad process for addressing both climate and sustainability.

Local governments that wish to develop a plan that not only addresses greenhouse gas emissions reductions, but also includes related measures to improve local sustainability, should follow the Five Milestones for Sustainability. The Five Milestones for Sustainability also complement the STAR Community Index, which is currently in development. Local governments will be able to follow the Milestones while also receiving credits through the STAR rating system.

Getting Started

Prior to launching into the Five Milestone process, you should take a few preliminary steps to get organized and to make a commitment. The chief elected official should publicly commit to developing a sustainability plan and should appoint someone to coordinate the planning process, typically a sustainability coordinator. To guide the plan development, local governments should form an external sustainability advisory board along with an interdepartmental team to participate in the development of the plan.

Milestone One: Conduct a sustainability assessment

To begin the planning process, a local government needs to first research and assess environmental, economic, and social equity challenges within the jurisdiction, and the programs in place to address these issues. The sustainability assessment includes a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and forecast for local government operations and the community as a whole and takes into account other key sustainability indicators. The assessment is used to gather baseline data and to identify the challenges to be addressed in the plan. Local governments will be able to use the indicators in the STAR Community Index to help them define the scope of their plan.

Milestone Two: Set sustainability goals

The sustainability goals define the overarching objectives and scope of the sustainability plan. The goals should address the challenges identified in Milestone One. The type and number of goals can vary by jurisdiction, but they should include an emissions reduction target along with other goals addressing issues such as affordable housing, natural resources conservation, or public transportation.

Milestone Three: Develop a sustainability plan

The local government then develops a sustainability plan, ideally with robust public input from all stakeholders. The plan details the policies and measures that the local government will take to improve local sustainability and achieve the goals defined in Milestone Two. Most plans include a timeline, a description of financing mechanisms, and an assignment of responsibility to departments and staff. Milestone Three should involve a public participation component to solicit ideas from the public and to receive feedback from the public on measures being considered for the plan.

Milestone Four: Implement the sustainability plan

The local government implements the policies and measures in the sustainability plan. Typical policies and measures include initiatives often found in a climate action plan, such as energy efficiency improvements to municipal buildings and water treatment facilities, streetlight retrofits, public transit improvements, installation of renewable power applications, and methane recovery from waste management. Other initiatives could include creating more park space, developing affordable housing, or creating a green jobs workforce development program.

Milestone Five: Monitor and evaluate progress

Monitoring and verifying implementation progress is an ongoing process. Achieving Milestone Five involves annually reporting on implementation progress and monitoring the overall sustainability of the jurisdiction using the sustainability indicators identified in Milestone One.