USDN | urban sustainability directors network

USDN Long-Term Strategic Vision Executive Summary

USDN MISSION

Connecting local government practitioners to accelerate urban sustainability in U.S. and Canadian communities.

USDN VISION FOR 2022

USDN governments are leading the way to a sustainable, low-carbon future by developing, adopting, and sharing practices that create equitable and prosperous communities and a healthy environment.

USDN THEORY OF CHANGE

Peer exchange and collaboration between local government sustainability leaders catalyzes the creation and implementation of urban sustainability solutions. The network creates change in the world by connecting members to share and learn from each other, incentivizing collaboration, and collectively leveraging resources.

USDN GOALS

The plan establishes the following four goals, with descriptions detailed in the full Final Draft:
1. Maintain and Evolve the Peer Exchange Core
2. Incentivize Innovation of High-Impact Sustainability Practices to Create Impact
3. Accelerate Adoption of High-Impact Sustainability Practices to Create Impact
4. Enhance Network Effectiveness

As shown in the image below, the plan maintains peer exchange as the foundation of USDN (goal 1). It also identifies a formal pathway to support innovation in the field of urban sustainability (goal 2) and help members accelerate widespread adoption of practices to enhance sustainability (goal 3).

Phases of Practice Development: USDN Impact Pathway for Strategic Activities
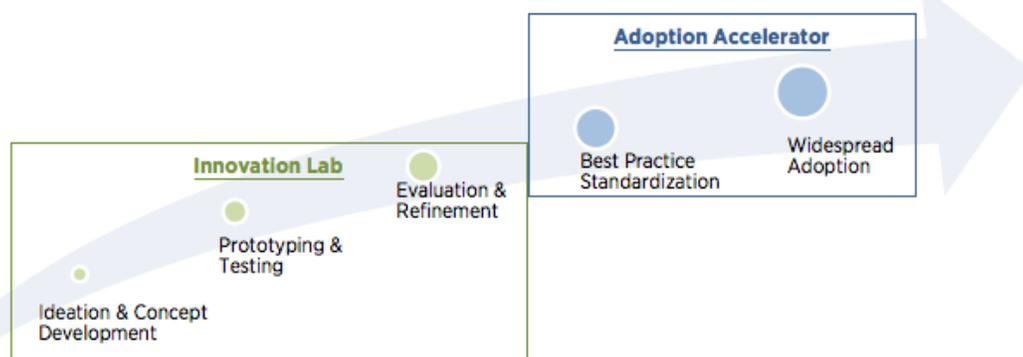
WHAT IS NEW AND DIFFERENT?

The Long Term Strategic Plan culminates USDN's first multi-year strategic visioning process. Through the yearlong process, members and external stakeholders have told network leadership to keep doing what has led to our current success. In addition, we need to do more, do it more strategically, and drive toward impact. The USDN Planning Committee believes this plan will help individual members, network leaders, and staff design activities that will result in tangible impact in USDN member communities and will improve our ability as a network to track and communicate those impacts.

The Final Draft preserves much of USDN's existing programming, with strategic adjustments to USDN programing for the Innovation Lab and the Adoption Accelerator. For example, User Groups and member grant funds will continue to be offered, but each group or grant team will work toward one of the first three goals – peer exchange, innovation, or adoption. USDN staff will support each team to help them reach that ultimate goal. Additionally, USDN will continue to collect data from members for continuous improvement of programs, but it will also look to quantify the impact that network activities have on members' local initiatives.

USDN STRATEGIES

Plan Goals	Plan Strategies
Maintain and Evolve the Peer Exchange Core	1.1. Continue to highly prioritize the USDN Annual Meeting as the flagship member connectivity opportunity. 1.2. Develop convening and connecting opportunities (outside of the Annual Meeting) for specialist members. 1.3. Grow and reposition the Peer Learning Exchange Fund as part of a larger USDN investment strategy. 1.4. Maintain Peer Exchange User Groups to facilitate member learning on sustainability issues and practices of joint interest. 1.5. Maintain coordination with regional networks to extend learnings and foster additional peer exchange opportunities for members. 1.6. Enhance mechanisms to improve understanding of and communicate the impact of USDN peer exchange. 1.7. Improve the website to be a hub of learning on sustainability practices.
Incentivize Innovation of High-Impact Sustainability Practices	2.1. Create Innovation Work Groups around prioritized practice areas. 2.2. Focus Innovation Lab projects on idea creation, prototyping, and evaluation. 2.3. Reposition and refocus the USDN Innovation Fund as a part of a larger USDN investment strategy. 2.4. Continue to support the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance.
Accelerate Adoption of High-Impact Sustainability Practices	3.1. Conduct a High Impact Practices member survey building on the 2016 Member Impact Survey to inform selection of the Pathway's high impact practices. 3.2. Conduct a member-led process to identify up to 15 High Impact Sustainability Practices for prioritized support. 3.3. Establish adoption goals and shared metrics for High Impact Sustainability Practices. 3.4. Create Adoption Accelerator Work Groups. 3.5. Make strategic investments to help large numbers of members advance implementation of prioritized actions. 3.6. Establish an Adoption Accelerator Grants Program. 3.7. Establish an Adoption Accelerator Peer Learning Grant offering.
Enhance Network Effectiveness	4.1. Redesign the USDN membership structure to clarify eligibility, benefits, and requirements. 4.2. Develop a multi-year funding plan anchored by a diversified revenue stream. 4.3. Develop a common framework through which members are asked to report innovation and adoption efforts. 4.4. Develop USDN-wide strategies for Investments, Partnerships, and Secondary Networks, to coordinate programs and investments across USDN's peer learning and innovation and impact. 4.5. Develop a formalized Partnership Strategy with a goal to engage external partners and communicate with external audiences. 4.6. Work closely with key funders and partners to identify new resources. 4.7. Ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the work of the network. 4.8. Evaluate organizational structure options, including independent 501(c)3 status, and select and implement one for USDN going forward. 4.9. Develop performance measures across strategic plan goal areas. 4.10. Produce an annual State of the Network report.