

Strong Cities Strong Communities National Resource Network (SC2 NRN)

Pre-Engagement Interview Guide

The Strong Cities Strong Communities National Resource Network (SC2 NRN) is interested in understanding the benefits that the SC2 NRN may bring to cities. Toward that end, the SC2 NRN management team has contracted with the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization based in Washington, DC, to conduct an evaluation of the SC2 NRN program.

Your city recently underwent a pre-engagement assessment by the SC2 NRN. Your city, along with many others, was selected for inclusion in the program evaluation that involves a series of interviews with project stakeholders.

Your participation in this call is voluntary but it's very much appreciated. I'd like to emphasize that what we're doing is neither a regulatory review nor an audit of your project but, rather, a source of additional information that will assist us in better understanding the SC2 NRN program.

The information you give us will be combined with information we receive from all others we talk with, and the Urban Institute will not cite or report it in any way that would identify you. Do you understand all that I have said? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

<if no>:

Thank you for your time.

<if yes>:

I anticipate that the call will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. We will take notes and use this information to help tell the story of the SC2 NRN in your city. We would also like to audio record this call to more accurately capture your responses. Will you allow us to record the call?

Again, I very much appreciate your cooperation. Do you have any questions before we begin?

A. BACKGROUND

- Please describe your current position (e.g., overall responsibilities, reports to whom)
- How long have you worked for the city?
- How did you first hear about SC2 NRN?
- Tell us about the departments and people in your city who will be a part of the SC2 NRN engagement.
- What other TA engagements has your city participated in?
 - How successful have previous TA engagements been? Why?

B. PRE-TA CHALLENGES

- What are your city's core operational capacity challenges and other challenges to economic wellbeing?
- What actions or policies have you implemented in the past to try to overcome these core challenges?
 - Have they worked? Why or why not?
 - What were the main roadblocks to addressing these challenges?

C. TYPE OF TA DESIRED AND GOALS

- What kinds of TA did you originally request in your technical assistance application?
- Did the pre-engagement assessment affect your TA request and goals? If so, how?
 - How helpful was the pre-engagement assessment in defining core challenges?
 - How helpful was the pre-engagement assessment in identifying TA needs?
 - If the pre-engagement assessment affected your TA request and goals, do you think that this new TA will be more successful or less successful than the TA that you originally requested?
- What technical assistance would you like now from SC2 NRN? And what are the long-term goals of this TA?
 - How will this TA address the key challenge or challenges that your city faces?
 - What intermediate steps and outcomes need to occur in order to achieve the long-term goals?
 - Is there a target population that the TA will aim to serve?
 - If so, who?
 - Will the desired TA build upon current/previous work?
 - If so, how?

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- As you see it, what role will the TA providers play?
- What level of intensity and duration do you expect for the TA engagement?
- Would you be able to accomplish these goals without the help of the TA?
 - What do you think would have happened had you not been chosen to receive TA?
- How easy or difficult was it to come up with the local matching funds? Why?

D. ROADBLOCKS

- What are the biggest challenges that you expect to face when implementing the TA?
- Have these challenges arisen in the past?
 - If so, how have you addressed them?
 - How do you plan to address these challenges for this engagement?
- Has there been any pushback from government leaders, business leaders, civic leaders, or community members when implementing similar programs?
 - If there has been pushback, how did you address it?
 - How do you plan to address pushback for this program?

E. CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

- Who do you currently work with on [*the topic that you requested assistance for*]?
 - Government stakeholders:
 - Community stakeholders:
 - Business leaders:
 - Non-profit leaders:
- Do you have a pre-existing collaborative group (either between agencies, cities, or non-governmental actors) that meets regularly on issues of community and economic development?
- Can you list the people, agencies, or organizations you could work with or consult on community and economic development issues?
- How engaged are local government, business, and civic leaders in tackling your city's challenges?
 - To what extent do they share a common agenda or have many competing objectives?
 - How well do government, business, and civic leaders work together on these problems?
- Can you describe any collaborative efforts your city has engaged in? What was the status/health of the collaboration in those efforts?

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- How much internal support for SC2 NRN is there within your agency and within your city government overall?
- How many full-time equivalent staff will your city government invest in the TA engagement?
 - For how long?
- You previously described the actors who will be involved in this effort. Is the right mix of stakeholders at the table? Are there any key stakeholders missing?
 - Other governments: state, local
 - Nonprofit
 - Community representatives
 - Business
- Can you describe the status of collaboration between your agency/group and these stakeholders?
- Do you expect any changes in collaboration between you and other stakeholders as a result of the technical assistance?

F. DOCUMENTING OUTCOMES

- Have you collected baseline data on the problem that the TA will address?
 - If so, what data?
- How will you measure the progress of the TA?
 - How will you know if the TA is “working”?
 - How will you calculate the costs and savings of different activities?
 - How will you measure improvements in quality of life?

G. NATIONAL RESOURCE NETWORK

- How familiar are you with the services/activities the National Resource Network offers beyond direct TA engagements?
- How often do you plan to participate in NRN activities, if at all?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - marketing and engagement
 - clearinghouse
 - peer networks
 - Local Resource Networks (LRN)
 - policy recommendations
- What outcomes do you hope to achieve from participating in the NRN?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Do you expect to implement any changes or policies that you learn from the NRN?

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- Do you expect to expand your contacts and resources as a result of the network?
- Do you expect the NRN to provide assistance that would not otherwise be available or accessible?
- Do you expect to leverage additional private sector and philanthropic funding as a result of the NRN?
- Do you expect to access additional state and federal funding as a result of interacting with the NRN?
- Clearinghouse:
 - Are you familiar with the clearinghouse, the online resource library at XYZ.org?
 - How helpful do you think the clearing house will be?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Accessible
 - Available
 - Relevant
 - Clear
 - Timely
 - How often do you anticipate using the clearinghouse in the future?
 - Have you already accessed the clearinghouse?
 - Do you think that the clearinghouse will help you to expand or improve local policies or initiatives? Why or why not?
- Peer Network Activities:
 - How familiar are you with the planned peer network activities?
 - Do you plan to attend webinars and engage in “ask and respond” and other virtual convening activities?
 - Do you plan to participate in in-person peer network activities?
 - How helpful do you think the peer networks will be?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Accessible
 - Available
 - Relevant
 - Clear
 - Timely
 - Do you think that the peer network will help you to leverage additional private sector and philanthropic funding? If so, how?
- Local Resource Networks
 - How familiar are you with the Local Resource Networks?
 - Do you plan to participate in the Local Resource Networks? Specifically, do you plan to utilize:

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- The toolkit?
- The funding pool?
- Curriculum?
- The mentorship network?
- How helpful do you think the Local Resource Network will be?

[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]

- Accessible
- Available
- Relevant
- Clear
- Timely
- How helpful do you think the Local Resource Network will be in connecting you to useful policy ideas?

H. CONCLUSION

- Is there anything you'd like to discuss that we didn't get a chance to talk about?

Strong Cities Strong Communities National Resource Network (SC2 NRN)

Post-Engagement Interview Guide

6/10/2015

The Strong Cities Strong Communities National Resource Network (SC2 NRN) is interested in understanding and articulating the benefits that the SC2 NRN may bring to economically distressed cities and regions. Toward that end, the SC2 NRN management team has contracted with the Urban Institute, a non-profit policy research organization based in Washington, DC, to conduct an evaluation of the SC2 NRN program.

Your city recently underwent an engagement by the SC2 NRN. Your city, along with many others, was selected at random for inclusion in the program evaluation that involves a series of interviews with project stakeholders. That's the reason for the call today.

Your participation in this call is voluntary but it's very much appreciated. I'd like to emphasize that what we're doing is neither a regulatory review nor an audit of your project but, rather, a source of additional information that will assist us in better understanding the SC2 NRN program.

The information you give us will be combined with information we receive from all others we talk with, and the Urban Institute will not cite or report it in any way that would identify you. However, because the information we collect is the property of SC2 NRN, I need to tell you that we cannot promise you confidentiality. We have been informed by SC2 NRN, nevertheless, that it is their intention to use the information only in aggregate form and only for research purposes. Do you understand all that I have said? Do you wish to participate in this interview?

<if no>:

Thank you for your time.

<if yes>:

I anticipate that the call will last approximately 90 minutes. We will take notes and use this information to help tell the story of the SC2 NRN in your city. We would also like to audio record this call to more accurately capture your responses. Will you allow us to record the call?

Again, I very much appreciate your cooperation. Do you have any questions before we begin?

A. BACKGROUND

- Please describe your current position (e.g., overall responsibilities, reports to whom)
- How long have you worked for the city?
 - How long have you worked in your current position?
- How did you first hear about SC2 NRN?
- Tell us about the departments and people in your city who have been a part of the SC2 NRN engagement. Are they the same departments and people you expected to participate prior to the engagement? If not, why did this change?
- What other TA engagements has your city participated in?
 - How successful had previous TA engagements been? Why had they been successful or unsuccessful?
 - How could they have been improved?

B. PRE-TA CHALLENGES

- What were your city's core operational capacity challenges and other challenges to economic wellbeing? These may be different from those outlined in the SC2 NRN application.
 - Were these different than those outlined in the SC2 NRN application?
 - How were these identified?
 - Were there disagreements about which problems to focus on? If so, how did you build consensus?
- What actions or policies had you implemented in the past to try to overcome these core challenges?
 - Had they worked? Why or why not?
 - What were the main roadblocks to addressing these challenges?

C. TYPE OF TA DESIRED AND GOALS

- What kinds of TA did you originally request in your technical assistance application?
- Did the engagement address your original request? If not, why not?
 - If the engagement did not address your original request, do you believe the areas it addressed were primary needs of the city?
 - Was the assistance offered by the engagement appropriate to address its stated purpose?
 - Did the engagement meet, surpass, or fall short of your expectations? How so?

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- What was the specific nature of the engagement? And what were its long-term goals?
 - How was the TA designed to address the challenges the city faced?
 - What intermediate steps and outcomes were taken in order to achieve the long-term goals? Did these match the original plan, or were they modified over time?
 - Was there a target population that the TA will aim to serve?
 - If so, who?
 - Was the desired TA build upon current/previous work?
 - If so, how?
 - As you see it, what role did the TA providers play?
 - What was level of intensity and duration for the TA engagement? Was it the same as what you expected?
- Would you have been able to accomplish these goals without the help of the TA?
 - What do you think would have happened had you not been chosen to receive TA?

D. ROADBLOCKS

- What are the biggest challenges that you expected to face when implementing the TA?
- Did these challenges arise during the engagement?
- Have these challenges arisen in the past?
 - If so, how did you address them?
 - If they did come up, did you address them in the same manner for the engagement? Why or why not?
- Has there been any pushback from government leaders, business leaders, civic leaders, or community members when implementing aspects of the engagement?
 - If there has been pushback, how did you address it?
 - How do you plan to address pushback in the future?

E. CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

- Who have you worked with on [*the topic that you requested assistance for*]?
 - Government stakeholders:
 - Community stakeholders:
 - Business leaders:
 - Non-profit leaders:
- Did you have a pre-existing collaborative group (either between agencies, cities, or non-governmental actors) that meets regularly on issues of community and economic development?
- Did such a group exist (continued or new) during the engagement?

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- How engaged were local government, business, and civic leaders in cooperating with or participating in the engagement activities?
 - To what extent did they share a common agenda or have many competing objectives?
 - How well did government, business, and civic leaders work together on these problems?
- Can you describe any other collaborative efforts your city has engaged in?
 - What was the status/health of the collaboration in those efforts?
 - Has this changed during the TA engagement?
- How much internal support for SC2 NRN was there within your agency and within your city government overall? Did this change during the course of the engagement?
- How many full-time equivalent staff did your city government invest in the TA engagement?
 - For how long?
 - Was this the same as was planned prior to the engagement?
- You previously described the actors who would be involved in this effort. Was the right mix of stakeholders at the table? Were there any key stakeholders missing?
 - Other governments: state, local
 - Nonprofit
 - Community representatives
 - Business
- Can you describe the status of collaboration between your agency/group and these stakeholders?
- Did you see any changes in collaboration between you and other stakeholders as a result of the technical assistance?

F. DOCUMENTING OUTCOMES

- Did you collect baseline data on the problem that the TA will address?
 - If so, what data?
- How did you measure the progress of the TA?
 - How did you know if the TA is “working”?
 - How did you calculate the costs and savings of different activities?
 - How did you measure improvements in quality of life?
 - Did any of these measurement strategies differ from the initial engagement plan? If so, how?

G. NATIONAL RESOURCE NETWORK

- How familiar were you with the National Resource Network before the engagement? And now?
 - What services/activities does/will it offer? Did you use or are you using any of these services/activities?
- How often have you participated in NRN activities, if at all?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - marketing and engagement
 - clearinghouse
 - peer networks
 - Local Resource Networks (LRN)
 - policy recommendations
- What outcomes did you achieve from participating in the NRN?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Did you implement any changes or policies that you learn from the NRN?
 - Did you expand your contacts and resources as a result of the network?
 - Did the NRN provide assistance that would not otherwise be available or accessible?
 - Did you leverage additional private sector and philanthropic funding as a result of the NRN?
 - Did you access additional state and federal funding as a result of interacting with the NRN?
- Clearinghouse:
 - Are you familiar with the clearinghouse, the online resource library at XYZ.org?
 - How helpful was this resource?*[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]*
 - Accessible
 - Available
 - Relevant
 - Clear
 - Timely
 - How often did you use the clearinghouse during the engagement?
 - How often do you expect to use the clearinghouse in the future?
 - Has the clearinghouse helped you to expand or improve local policies or initiatives? Why or why not?
- Peer Network Activities:
 - How familiar are you with the planned peer network activities?
 - Did you attend webinars and engage in “ask and respond” and other virtual convening activities?

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- Did you participate in in-person peer network activities?
- How helpful were the peer networks?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Accessible
 - Available
 - Relevant
 - Clear
 - Timely
- Do you think that the peer network helped you to leverage additional private sector and philanthropic funding? If so, how?
- Local Resource Networks
 - How familiar are you with the Local Resource Networks?
 - Did you participate in the Local Resource Networks? Specifically, did you utilize:
 - The toolkit?
 - The funding pool?
 - Curriculum?
 - The mentorship network?
 - How helpful do you think the Local Resource Network were?
[If needed, probe with the following bullets:]
 - Accessible
 - Available
 - Relevant
 - Clear
 - Timely
 - How helpful do you think the Local Resource Network will be in connecting you to useful policy ideas?

H. CONCLUSION

- Is there anything you'd like to discuss that we didn't get a chance to talk about?