

Sustainable Communities Councils

Broad-based economic development plans tend to be top down efforts, typically designed and implemented by or with a government entity and deployed with little input from the intended beneficiaries.

The [Sustainable Communities Framework](#)¹ (SCF) is a different kind of economic development program, designed to be region-based and built by citizens themselves from the ground up.

Architected by the core team at [National Commonwealth Group](#) (NCG)² with over 140 years' experience in establishing and running community scaled for-profit and non-profit organizations, the program will be managed through the [Sustainable Communities Institute](#)³.

The SCF was designed to not only incorporate existing best practices as a starting point for a broad-based community-centric development system, but to evolve and grow based on community input.

This is why the Sustainable Communities Councils are a vital component of the program.

Nobody understands community challenges better than those who live and work there, and the SCF provides them with a means to articulate those issues, shape solutions, set priorities and help ensure the optimum deployment of the SCF.

Each area that local residents consider their community will be invited to establish a council. Members will be recruited from a representative cross section of the community, such as small businesses, non-profits, local government, community organizations, and other stakeholders. Each council will determine its own organizational structure and leadership. Councils will:

- Identify local needs and challenges.
- Develop sustainable strategies.
- Help distribute funds to programs, initiatives and organizations.
- Evaluate outcomes and share best practices.

The Institute will offer specific programs that can be used by all communities. The local council will help coordinate the implementation of those common programs in their community.

Each council also serves as an input mechanism to the Institute concerning challenges not addressed by the SCF, and in the process help to develop tools and solutions. The community can thus directly shape its future direction.

At the global level, each council will contribute to the overall regional effort, most likely through a regional organization composed of representatives of the individual councils. This regional council will help set regional priorities for deploying elements of the SCF and also serve as the collective feedback loop to NCG and the Institute on implementation of the SCF in that region.

Initially the SCF will be deployed under NCG's guidance and management via the Institute, including establishment of the financial infrastructure. Over time regional councils will be trained to assume full-time management of the SCF program.

Endnotes

1. <https://scf.green/what/>
2. <https://nationalcommonwealthgroup.net/about/team/>
3. The Sustainable Communities Institute (SCI) is intended to be the center of gravity for the Sustainable Communities Framework (SCF). A “think-do tank,” its researchers take an active role in the management of innovative, custom-designed programs and establishing a virtuous feedback loop including strategy, execution, evaluation, modification and reporting. This process will document the development of best practices, and continuously refine the methodology to better facilitate application of the SCF. A primary activity of the Institute will be to capture and report accurate measurement of the impact of the SCF. To best reflect the overall sustainability goals of the program, SCI will employ the more inclusive Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) to study the program's results.

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