



**America's Promise Alliance
Community & State Action Planning to
Improve Graduation and College-Readiness Rates**

The America's Promise Alliance is committed to mobilizing the vast resources of states and local communities to address their dropout challenges and help more young people graduate from high school, ready for college, work and life. While we aim to serve as a catalyst for this action, we recognize that it is the states and communities themselves who will drive, and *sustain*, the actions that are necessary to make high school graduation and college readiness a reality for all of their youth. The Alliance applauds the leadership of your Dropout Prevention Leadership Team in making these crucial issues a priority for your state or community and encourages the Team to use your Dropout Summit, as well as the Action Plan the Team develops here, to shape your state's or community's long-term commitment to addressing the dropout challenge.

All Alliance-funded summit states and communities are required to complete and submit an Action Plan, using the enclosed customizable worksheet, within 60 days of your summit in order to fulfill your Dropout Summit grant agreement. (Note: It may be helpful to answer some of the questions before your Summit to inform your agenda planning.) The Alliance recognizes that states and communities are in various stages along the continuum of addressing their dropout challenges, so this action planning worksheet is meant to be flexible enough to apply to your local context. It is based upon and refers to sections of *Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis*, a rich resource we commissioned to help you delve deeper into the questions and access many of the leading organizations and tools available around the country that can help you do this work. Please provide as much detail in your answers as you can, reflecting how far along your state or community is in the planning process. While we strongly suggest responding to both the open-ended questions that ask for narrative summaries of your high-level goals and objectives, as well as the charts and check-off boxes that ask for your more specific tactical priorities, we understand that some of you may not be at the point where you have developed this much detail. Please do the best that you can.

Note that America's Promise Alliance may share your Team's Action Plan with leading national organizations and funding agents interested in providing resources – financial, human, and intellectual – to help your state or community pursue the priorities that are identified.

Helpful Resource to Do This Work

The Alliance recommends the following resource to help inform your Action Plan:

Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis, by Robert Balfanz and Joanna Hornig Fox of the Everyone Graduates Center, and John Bridgeland and Mary McNaught of Civic Enterprises.

See www.americaspromise.org/GradNation

The *Grad Nation* Action Tool (pp. 91-93) provides a rapid assessment of your progress against the recommendations in *Grad Nation*. Completing it should give you a jump-start on developing a high-quality, evidence-based action plan.



ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Action Plan to Help More Young People Graduate High School, Ready for College, Work & Life

Name of Summit State or Community: Minnesota

Date and Location of Summit: Metro Summit, St. Paul, MN November 17, 2009 * State Summit, Mendota Heights, MN November 18, 2009

Geographical Area Covered by Action Plan: Metro Schools, and Statewide (i.e. which county(ies), school district(s), etc.)

Date Submitted: February 5, 2010

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[Note: The Alliance is especially interested in the data, priorities, and plans emanating from your dropout prevention summit, so you are encouraged to highlight those as appropriate in your answers below. If your state or community has a pre-existing comprehensive action plan to improve your graduation and college readiness rates, please attach it as an appendix to this document.]

I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State's or Community's Dropout & College-Readiness Challenges

(See Part 2 of Grad Nation, pp. 22-41, for help with this area of planning.)

1. What is your state's or community's current graduation rate? (please cite the source and methodology)

Minnesota's high school graduation rate for the 2007-2008 academic year was 72.8%. This four-year graduation rate is based on a cohort of first time ninth grade students plus transfers into the cohort minus transfers out of the cohort within the four year period. The rate is similar to, but not the same as the National Governor's Rate (NGA) as the NGA rate allows more time for special education students and recent immigrants to graduate. Although this graduation rate is unacceptably low, it masks even more critical graduation rates for various student groups, such as:

American Indian	41.0%	Hispanic	39.6%
Black	40.9%	Limited English Proficient	43.4%
Special Education	51.8%	Free and Reduced Price Lunch	51.8%

Source: (check all that apply)

- State department of education
 School district/school board
 Independent research organization – please specify:

- Minnesota’s economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about 77.8 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%.

Addressing the root causes of dropping out of school requires better engaging children and youth in school and helping them to graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully meet the challenges life brings after completing high school.

See handouts included in Metro and Statewide Summits for more information on key data points and key message points to secure commitment from the community, state leaders and general public.

(List key data and message points below inserting additional rows as needed.)

Key Data Points	Key Message Points

If you don’t yet have these data and message points, what are your plans to obtain them?

1. Who is serving or can serve as your state’s or community’s champion and chief spokesperson around the high school dropout issue? If multiple spokespeople are needed, which leaders – elected officials, business leaders, other local influentials – will be recruited? What champions spoke at the summit, and how will they remain engaged over the next 6-12 months?

Champions include Twin Cities Mayors, R.T. Rybak and Chris Coleman, Youth who have experienced issues in school, Peter Benson, CEO Search Institute, Alice Seagren, Commissioner of Education, other elected officials. All of the above are very committed to the issue of drop out prevention and will be called upon to speak on our behalf.

2. Does your state or community have a vision statement for your young people, related to their successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work?

Vision Statement:

The intent to reduce dropout rates is clearly reflected as one of the four 2007 goals of the Governor’s Education Council, aiming at a 100% graduation rate by 2016. Moreover, the vision detailed by Minnesota’s College and Career Readiness Policy Institute (CCRPI) leadership team included high school graduation rates as one of our six power indicators. In addition, each of the collaborating partners have vision statements that are clearly related to positive youth development, successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work.

3. Has your workgroup or will it set a quantifiable long-term goal (e.g. a 3-, 5- or 10-year goal) for your dropout and college-readiness challenges? *(Example from Detroit: “Vision- All children and youth in southeastern Michigan graduate from high school prepared for life, work and postsecondary education. Goal- The 30 high schools in the region with dropout rates of 40% or higher will be transformed into small schools or learning communities graduating 80% of youth with an average ACT score of 18 within four years after entering 9th grade.”)*

Minnesota’s statewide goals for increasing graduation, decreasing dropout and meeting college-readiness challenges are a priority at the Minnesota Department of Education and these goals are shared and supported by multiple stakeholders. These goals are articulated in many documents including the *Governor’s Education Council Report and Goals*.

Most recently, the Minnesota Department of Education was selected as one of six states to receive an award from the National Governor’s Association (NGA). The NGA will work with Minnesota to advance state dropout prevention and recovery by providing resources and technical assistance would strengthen and complement other ongoing Minnesota activities. Minnesota’s proposal focuses on four recommended NGA *Achieving Graduation for All* actions.

- **Promote graduation for all.** Responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery at the state and local levels will be enhanced through multiple avenues, including the systemic use of early warning indicators, the implementation of appropriate and effective strategies and programs, and the collaboration of multiple stakeholders.
- **Target youth at risk of dropping out.** A framework of effective strategies, aligned with an early indicator system, will be developed and disseminated. Targeted interventions and supports will be implemented to engage youth in school and learning, leading to improved graduation rates.
- **Reengage youth who have dropped out of school.** Incentives for dropout recovery, such as the Fast Track program newly implemented in Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs (which allows students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and a two year college degree or industry certification) will be introduced and expanded.
- **Provide rigorous, relevant options for earning a high school diploma.** Redesigned high schools will implement multiple dual credit options and provide on- ramp programs to support students not ready for postsecondary.

Goals:

(List key goals below, inserting additional rows as needed.)

Goals related to high school graduation rates	Goals related to college-readiness and success rates

If no quantifiable goals have been set, please describe if/when you anticipate them being set and by whom.

III. Identifying Solutions: Considering and Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Local Dropout Challenge

1. As a result of your summit and follow-up planning process, what are your state’s or community’s top 3-5 next steps for improving your graduation and college readiness rates?

Our plan is to continue to focus on the 5 key strategies identified at the State Summit: Literacy Development; Afterschool Opportunities; Service-Learning; Family Engagement; and School-Community Collaboration. Our plan is to reconvene the State Summit participants in the Spring to continue to discuss follow-up, commitment plans, and progress of our future collective work. We will also be hosting 7 community/regional dialogues throughout MN in the Spring. The issue of Drop Out Prevention will be included in each of these gatherings. Action Plans will be developed, collected, and analyzed. We are currently following up with each of the 20+ schools that attended the Metro Summit. Follow-up meetings include getting updates on each of the schools “Commitment to Action Plans”, identifying barriers to success, share best practices, and identify resources needed to ensure high school completion for all youth.

The Alliance advocates four focus areas that we believe to be key in addressing the dropout issue at the state and local levels:

- 1) **transforming schools** including through increasing curricular rigor and relevance
- 2) **supporting young people** holistically with wraparound services
- 3) **developing effective policies**, and
- 4) **employing data systems** as a dropout prevention tool.

These four areas of work are discussed in Part 3 of *Grad Nation* (pp. 42-75) and examples of the strategies/priorities under each of these areas are provided in the respective charts below. We are interested in better understanding your state's or community's plans in each of those areas. In the following four questions, we ask that you identify, as much as possible given your stage of planning, your priorities consistent with those four areas of work. Given that much of education is under local control, we recognize state summits and community summits will result in different priorities and strategies under these areas of work, and encourage you to answer accordingly.

2. Please identify the most significant strategies and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* emanating from the summit that your state or community will pursue in order to **transform the schools** that the majority of your local/state dropouts attend.

(Example: "The New York City Department of Education's Children First agenda has overhauled the school system by closing large failing high schools and opening up clusters of small high schools in their place. This shift to small schools offers more options, a more personalized learning experience, high expectations for all students, and theme-based studies.")

Our major goals for transforming our under-performing schools are: (please limit your answer to no more than 200 words)

Many of the key strategies focused on at the Graduation Summits will provide the foundation for transforming underperforming schools. Minnesota is committed to identifying and supporting these schools in order to improve outcomes for all students. Specifically, the Summits focused on how Literacy Development; Afterschool Opportunities; Service-Learning; Family Engagement; and School-Community Collaboration can be enhanced to better engage our students and improve the outcomes for underperforming schools.

In addition, consistent with Minnesota's NGA proposal, strategies will also include.

- **Promoting graduation for all.** Responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery at the state and local levels will be enhanced through multiple avenues, including the systemic use of early warning indicators, the implementation of appropriate and effective strategies and programs, and the collaboration of multiple stakeholders.
- **Targeting youth at risk of dropping out.** A framework of effective strategies, aligned with an early indicator system, will be developed and disseminated. Targeted interventions and supports will be implemented to engage youth in school and learning, leading to improved graduation rates.
- **Reengaging youth who have dropped out of school.** Incentives for dropout recovery, such as the Fast Track program newly implemented in Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs (which allows students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and a two year college degree or industry certification) will be introduced and expanded.
- **Providing rigorous, relevant options for earning a high school diploma.** Redesigned high schools will implement multiple dual credit options and provide on-ramp programs to support students not ready for postsecondary.

(OPTIONAL: After describing your strategic priorities for **transforming schools** above, we encourage you to benchmark your priorities against evidence-based practice by reviewing the chart below of strategies and/or reforms consistent with Grad Nation. For each, please indicate what priority level it is for your state/community, and whether pursuing it would be a relatively new effort or would be building on a well-established effort underway.)

Transforming schools by:	PRIORITY LEVEL			NEW EFFORT OR BUILDS ON EXISTING	
	High	Medium	Low	New	Existing
Curriculum					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing a college and career-ready curriculum with rigorous requirements and expectations for quality of student work. 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding college-level learning opportunities 					X
Multi-tiered dropout prevention, intervention and recovery systems are put into place.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing early warning systems 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing on-track indicators 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employing positive support and recognition systems 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing transitional support systems (middle grades into high school, high school into college and careers) 					X
Human capital is developed					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting administrators and teachers with coaching and professional development 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising staffing ratios and teacher allocations to benefit the most struggling students 					X
High schools with high dropout rates (and their feeder middle schools) are revitalized and reconfigured					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dividing existing large schools into small schools 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating new schools 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing schools into small units or academies 					X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing teachers into teams 					X
Other (describe)					
Service-Learning	X				X
School-Community Partnerships	X				X

For your highest priority strategies or reforms, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Multiple efforts through various collaborating partners are currently in place. The Metro and Statewide Graduation Summits focused efforts on developing and promoting the 10 key strategies identified by the Drop Out Prevention Center (Clemson University) to better engage youth in school

and learning, with a special emphasis on 5 of the 10: Literacy Development; Family Engagement; Afterschool Opportunities; Service-Learning; School-Community Collaboration.

3. Please identify the most significant strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* emanating from the summit that your state or community will pursue in order to **support young people**. How will more young people, particularly those most in need, receive wraparound supports in and out of school, such as tutoring, afterschool programs, mentors, social services, health care and others?
(Examples from New York State: “1. Ensure that each student is connected to one caring adult in school, by structuring mentoring programs that can be implemented with limited resources. 2. Provide quality afterschool programs that can increase student voice and provide social, emotional, physical and intellectual support to youth.”)

Our major goals for supporting young people are: (please limit your answer to no more than 200 words)

Significant strategies emphasized at the Metro and Statewide Graduation Summits that will receive continued attention include

- Literacy Development
- Family Engagement
- Afterschool Opportunities
- Service-Learning
- School-Community Collaboration

Please refer to previous responses.

(OPTIONAL: After describing your strategic priorities for supporting young people above, we encourage you to benchmark your priorities against evidence-based practice by reviewing the chart below of strategies and/or reforms consistent with Grad Nation. For each, please indicate what priority level it is for your state/community, and whether pursuing it would be a relatively new effort or would be building on a well-established effort underway.)

Supporting young people by:	PRIORITY LEVEL			NEW EFFORT OR BUILDS ON EXISTING	
	High	Medium	Low	New	Existing
• Developing multi-tiered response systems to align tailored student supports with specific student needs.					
• Increasing the number of committed adults providing student supports as tutors, mentors, and graduation advocates.					
• Engaging more parents and caregivers in their children’s school-lives.					
• Launching a community-wide campaign to improve the attendance of all students.					
• Supporting school-based health centers.					
• Developing more after-school opportunities.					
• Creating school-community partnerships that bring additional supports and opportunities to students and their families.					
Other (describe)					

For your highest priority strategies and reforms, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance them? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

4. Please identify the most significant policies or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* emanating from the summit that your state or community will pursue in order to **develop effective policies** at the local or state level that encourage high school completion and college readiness. (Example from Alabama: The state legislature raised the maximum compulsory school age from 16 to 17 years old.)

Our major goals for developing effective policies are: (please limit your answer to no more than 200 words)

Policies and reforms that will be pursued include suggestions that were generated by participants at the Statewide Summit. These suggestions will be addressed again at the follow-up meeting that will be held this Spring, and will concrete next steps to continue moving forward will be generated.

(OPTIONAL: After describing your strategic priorities for **developing effective policies** above, we encourage you to benchmark your priorities against evidence-based practice by reviewing the chart below of strategies and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation*. For each, please indicate what priority level it is for your state/community, and whether pursuing it would be a relatively new effort or would be building on a well-established effort underway.)

Policies related to:	PRIORITY LEVEL			NEW EFFORT OR BUILDS ON EXISTING	
	High	Medium	Low	New	Existing
• Attendance/Truancy					
• Grade retention/ promotion					
• Streamlining K-12 and higher education standards					
• Grading course performance/homework completion					
• GEDs					
• Promoting alternative schools/multiple pathways					
• School accountability measures					
• Legal dropout age					
• Establishing a state body to coordinate efforts to increase the graduation rate					
Other (describe)					

For your highest priority policy reforms, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance them? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

5. Please identify the most significant strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **employ data systems** that identify those young people most at-risk for dropping out and drive appropriate supports and services. *(Example from Iowa state: “Access multiple state agencies’ data, complete analysis and establish state level baseline and targets. State Team will provide relevant local data to Community Teams to assist in their planning and ongoing monitoring of progress.”)*

Our major goals for employing data systems are: (please limit your answer to no more than 200 words)

As part of MDE’s work with CCRPI and NGA, employing a data system to identify youth most at-risk for dropping out and providing appropriate supports and services is a priority. Minnesota already has an established longitudinal data system in place statewide that uses unique student numbers as identifiers for tracking progress. This system is being strengthened to provide data that is easily accessible and can be utilized in a timely manner to assist in keeping students on track to graduation/college and career readiness. Input from multiple stakeholders and collaborative partners has been used to identify robust and efficient indicators to track students over time and provide supports. It is anticipated that the The Minnesota Early Identification and Response System (MEIRS) will be used at the individual student level, school, district and state level to better respond to students who require additional supports to be successful.

*(OPTIONAL: After describing your strategic priorities for **employing data systems** above, we encourage you to benchmark your priorities against evidence-based practice by reviewing the chart below of strategies and/or reforms consistent with Grad Nation. For each, please indicate what priority level it is for your state/community, and whether pursuing it would be a relatively new effort or would be building on a well-established effort underway.)*

Data System Reforms:	PRIORITY LEVEL			NEW EFFORT OR BUILDS ON EXISTING	
	High	Medium	Low	New	Existing
• Statewide student identifiers					X
• Student-level enrollment data					X
• Student-level test data					X
• Information on un-tested students					X
• Statewide teacher identifier with student match	X			X	
• Student-level course completion (transcript data)	X			X	
• Student-level SAT, ACT and AP exam data	X			X	
• Student-level dropout and graduation data					X
• Ability to match student-level P-12 information with higher education data	X			X	
• State data audit system					
Other (describe)					

For your highest priority strategies and reforms, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance them? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources, and Tracking Progress over Time

(See Part 4 of Grad Nation, pp. 76-90, for help with this area of planning.)

Coordination and Leadership

1. Was there a workgroup or committee created in response to the summit to carry out the action plan? Did it exist prior to summit activities?

- Created in response to the summit
- Existed previously
- Existed previously, but is significantly strengthened by the summit

Name of workgroup or committee: Drop Out Prevention Summit Steering Committee

Please provide the following information for each member of the workgroup or committee.

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	SECTOR (Business, Education, Elected Official, Government, Non Profit, Other)
Cammy Lehr	Education Specialist	Minnesota Department of Education	Education
Mary Ackerman	Director of External Relations	Search Institute	Non-Profit
Wokie Weah	Vice President	National Youth Leadership Council	Non-Profit
Les Abrahamson	Director of Community Affairs	State Farm Insurance	Business
Sarah Dixon	President & CEO	Minnesota Alliance With Youth	Non-Profit

2. Which of the options below best describes the workgroup?

- School district task force
- Community-based collaborative
- Business-led collaborative
- Government-affiliated commission
- Other – please explain: Multi-Sector Collaboration

3. Has the group met since the summit?

- No
- Yes, once
- Yes, twice
- Yes, three or more times

4. Over the coming year, approximately how often do you anticipate the group will meet?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Bi-annually
- Other – please explain:

5. Will there be a recognized coordinator for moving the work of the group forward?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide the name, organization and contact information for the coordinator:

Average number of hours per week the coordinator has available to support the group:

6. Please indicate which sectors are represented in the composition of your workgroup:

- K-12 Education
- Higher Education
- Business, economic development agencies, etc.
- Nonprofit service providers
- Government agencies
- Child welfare/children & family services
- Elected officials and/or their representatives
- Parents and caregivers
- Youth
- Faith-based community
- Media
- Foundations
- Civic organizations
- Other – please explain: We hope to expand the work group to include more diverse representation

Please attach a roster of your workgroup's members, including their organizational affiliations and titles. See attached

Financial, human, and other resources

Does your work group have existing funds to start implementation?

Each of the collaborating partners uses their funds in part to support this work. Funds continue to be generated through various proposals targeted for dropout prevention (e.g., NGA grant to pursue data systems that identify students at risk and provide supports). However, specific funds to continue the work of this committee do not exist, and time/resources are provided on an in-kind basis.

- Yes
- No

Has the workgroup applied for or received new or expanded financial resources to support its work?

- Yes, we applied for funding, but were not selected.
- Yes, we applied for funding but have not received a response yet.
- Yes, we applied and were selected, but have not yet received the funds.
- Yes, we have received new or expanded funding.
- No, we have not applied for new or expanded funding.

Please briefly describe the funds applied for and/or received:

Has an assessment of current financial, human, programmatic and other resources been completed?

- Yes
- No

If an assessment has been completed, have gaps in resources been identified?

- Yes
- No

Are you setting a resource development goal?

- Yes
- No

If yes, has a plan for reaching the goal been developed? In process

- Yes
- No

Does the plan include funders and other potential partners to approach?

- Yes
- No

Evaluating and reporting impact

Has the workgroup developed an evaluation to assess/monitor the effectiveness of its work?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide a concise summary or the evaluation plan:

Will your workgroup initiate or collaborate on additional planning/awareness activities? (check all that apply)

- Regional/local summits
- Business summits/roundtables/briefings
- Youth summits
- Parent summits
- Other – please explain:

Please briefly describe the planning/awareness activities:

Follow-up meeting with Statewide Summit participants in the Spring. We are also planning to host 7 regional gatherings in the Spring. Meetings are currently underway with each of the 20+ schools that participated in the Metro Summit.

V. Staying Connected to the America’s Promise Alliance: Identifying Long-term Interests, Priorities, and Points of Alignment

- As part of our Alliance’s *Grad Nation: Campaign for the Promise of America* and our goal of helping the nation cut the dropout rate in half by 2018, America’s Promise has committed to resourcing and advocating for certain strategic priorities. Together, we are always looking for states and communities that share similar interests and that may provide effective models for policy and practice, investment opportunities and other points of alignment, including possible technical assistance from our Alliance partners. Please describe your level of interest/priority for the following:

ALLIANCE STRATEGIES & INTERESTS	PRIORITY LEVEL			HAVE EFFECTIVE OR MODEL PRACTICE TO SHARE
	High	Medium	Low	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging parents and caregivers to increase graduation and college readiness rates 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting young people in foster care so they graduate from high school prepared for college, work and life 	X			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing young people’s financial literacy 	X			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on the middle school years, especially providing service-learning and career exploration opportunities in and out of school 	X			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving young people’s access to quality health care, including promotion of SCHIP and Medicaid public health insurance programs 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating community hubs (e.g. schools, afterschool programs, community centers) where coordinated wraparound supports are available to young people and their families 	X			Yes

- How can the America’s Promise Alliance best support your state or community with the implementation of this dropout prevention plan? The Alliance is interested in hearing how we can best assist you in your dropout prevention efforts, including resources we can provide, relationships we can facilitate, and any other needs your community may have. *Please be as expansive and forthright as you can. We will use your feedback to ensure that the most useful resources are provided to our Dropout Summit states and communities through our website, training and technical assistance, and other means.*