

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Regional Sustainable Funders Network to Increase Energy Audits and Retrofits*

- **Year Complete:** 2013
- **Local Government:** City of Cincinnati, OH
- **Local Foundation:** Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile Jr. / U.S. Bank Foundation, PNC Foundation, Charles H. Dater Foundation

Project Purpose

To create a regional sustainability funders' network, build the capacity of Green Umbrella, the regional sustainability alliance, and complete energy audits and retrofits.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

A primary factor in the growth and success of Green Umbrella was the depth of collaborative relationships with the region's existing planning organizations. They provided credibility and linkages vital to progress. Communication among the action teams was critical. The Action Team Leadership Council reported monthly to the Board of Trustees on action team operations. Prioritization was key to the success of an organization like Green Umbrella. The demand for services far exceeded capacity, so leadership must be selective regarding project involvement. Internships played a critical role in staffing day-to-day operations of Green Umbrella, strengthening ties between the organization and the community. They also provided excellent learning opportunities for the next generation of sustainability advocates.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

A Green Umbrella "backbone" organization model could be very helpful to municipal sustainability managers seeking to create "community ownership" of the sustainability initiatives they want to promote in their cities. It also creates a "fiscal vehicle" for the local foundation community to be partners with local sustainability managers seeking financial support for their initiatives.

Additional Information and Resources

Green Umbrella first organized in 1998 as an effort to unite citizens and organizations concerned about preserving and restoring the abundant diversity of wildlife and plants that thrive in the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana area. Since then, it has expanded its partner base, mission, and service area to become a strong sustainability alliance for the region around Cincinnati.

Green Umbrella now works to improve the economic vitality and quality of life by maximizing the collective impact of a wide range of concerned citizens and organizations in 10 counties dedicated to environmental sustainability. Read more about Green Umbrella's work, including efforts towards reduction of food waste [here](#).