

A Guide to Preparing Short Term Work Program (STWP) Updates for Local Governments



Short Term Work Programs

Are for the purpose of scheduling specific actions that the local government intends to take to address the needs and goals identified in the plan.

Introduction

In order to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status under the Georgia Planning Act, local governments must have an approved and adopted Short Term Work Program (STWP) for implementation of their Comprehensive Plan. The STWP is a key implementation tool, which reflects those activities and strategies the local government has chosen to undertake in the current five-year period. The STWP must be updated periodically.

Local governments have two options to meet the minimum requirements for updating the Short Term Work Program portion of their comprehensive plans:

- 1) Annual update: Local governments may prepare annual updates to the STWP. Each annual update must include a new fifth year and any changes to the work program for the other four years of the STWP. **Annual updates of the STWP do not have to include a report of accomplishments for activities listed in the previous STWP ;**

Or,

- 2) 5-Year update: The local government may prepare a new STWP every five years. This new STWP must cover the upcoming five-year period, and must include a report of the local government's accomplishments in implementing its previous STWP, covering the five year period just passed.

Local governments that are charging development impact fees must update both the STWP and the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) of their plan annually, but need not submit a report of accomplishments with the update.

New Short Term Work Program

The new STWP shall consist of:

- 1) Major actions to be undertaken by a municipality or county to implement plan recommendations;

These actions can include a description of community and economic development initiatives or programs, public or private; major capital improvements or infrastructure expansions; and administrative systems, regulatory measures or land development regulations to be adopted or amended.

- 2) Time frames for implementing each of the major recommendations;
- 3) Responsible party for implementing each of the major recommendations; and,
- 4) Estimated cost (if any), and alternative funding sources (if applicable), for implementing each major recommendation.

Report of Accomplishments

For a 5-year update, the local government must also submit a Report of Accomplishments that identifies the current status of each activity in the old STWP. At a minimum, for each activity, the local government should indicate whether the activity: has been completed; is currently underway--including a projected completion date; has been postponed, with an explanation of the reason; or, has not been accomplished and will no longer be undertaken or pursued by the local government, with an explanation for the reason.

Local Public Hearing

The local government must hold at least one public hearing. The purpose of the public hearing is to inform the public of the intent to update the comprehensive plan and to receive suggestions and comments on the proposed STWP update. Copies of the draft STWP update must be available to the public sufficiently in advance of this hearing to allow time for citizens to review the update and formulate their comments prior to the hearing. Local governments should follow the public hearing notification procedures they normally use in announcing and conducting public hearings.

Transmittal Resolution

The governing body (e.g., city council, county commission, etc.) of the local government must take official action to adopt a resolution authorizing transmittal of the draft STWP update to their Regional Development Center (RDC) for review and comment. (For joint STWP updates, each local government involved in the plan must adopt a transmittal resolution.) This resolution must also certify that the required public hearing referenced above was held.

The local government should submit two copies of the draft STWP update to the RDC no later than 120 days before its recertification date. [One copy will be forwarded by the RDC to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).] This will ensure that enough time is available to complete the RDC and DCA review process, including time for the local government to make any necessary changes to the STWP update, and to adopt the update before its Qualified Local Government status lapses. (QLG status expires on the day after the local government's official recertification date.)

Regional Review Hearing

A regional review hearing will be conducted by the RDC within twenty-five days of the date the STWP update was submitted to the RDC for review at which any parties may present their views on the draft STWP update under review.

DCA Review

If the draft STWP update **meets** the Minimum Standards and is approved by the Department of Community Affairs, then:

- The local government may officially adopt the STWP update without any revisions.

Note: In no event shall a local government adopt a plan that meets the Minimum Standards and Procedures until at least **60 days** after the STWP update is submitted to the Regional Development Center for review.

- The local government may also, at its option, revise the STWP update to take into account any recommendations for addressing conflicts or other matters that do not relate to compliance with the Minimum Standards before adopting the STWP update.

If the STWP update does **not meet** the Minimum Standards, then:

- The local government may revise the STWP update to address any findings related to compliance with the Minimum Standards and submit the revision(s) to the RDC for review and recommendation. The RDC must, in turn, forward the revisions to DCA for review. The process of revising the STWP and submitting the revisions for review may continue until the STWP is approved by DCA as meeting the Minimum Standards. Any revisions to the draft STWP update must also be reviewed by the RDC for internal consistency, conflicts with other plans, or opportunities for cooperation. Also, any changes made to the STWP update should be reviewed by the local governing body to decide if the changes are substantial enough to be presented to the public before they are included in the plan.

Note: To allow time for the local government to make the necessary revisions, the plan review period may be extended up to a maximum of six months from the date the draft STWP update was originally submitted to the RDC for review; however, the local government's QLG status will not be extended and may expire during this period. If more than six months elapse before the update is found to meet the Minimum Standards, it will be necessary for the local government to officially resubmit the STWP update for review and start the plan review process again.

- The local government may request a *reconsideration hearing* if it disagrees with any or all of the recommendations made by the RDC or DCA. The petition for a reconsideration hearing must be made to the RDC in writing within ten days after issuance of the RDC's report of findings and recommendations on the STWP update. The RDC must, in turn, notify DCA of the petition. The hearing must be held within 15 days after the RDC's receipt of the reconsideration petition. The rules for calling and conducting the reconsideration hearing are the same as those for the regional review hearing. Within 10 days after the reconsideration hearing, the reviewing RDC must reissue its recommendations regarding the STWP update to DCA with any modifications it feels are called for in light of issues raised at the reconsideration hearing.

- The local government may disregard the recommendations for bringing the STWP update into compliance with the Minimum Standards and adopt the update without revisions. However, for a local government to retain its QLG status, the officially adopted STWP update must have been approved by DCA as meeting the Minimum Standards.

The local government must notify the RDC, in writing, within seven days after officially adopting its STWP update. The notification to the RDC shall include a copy of the adopting resolution and a copy of the adopted STWP update.

After verifying that the officially adopted STWP update is the update approved by DCA as meeting the Minimum Standards, the RDC will send notification of adoption to DCA along with a copy of the adopted STWP.

Once DCA has received a copy of the notification of adoption along with a copy of the adopted STWP from the RDC, DCA will officially notify the local government that its QLG status has been extended. (A local government whose QLG status has expired can be reinstated at this time.)

DCA maintains a web site that lists the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning that make the rules for STWP updates available on line. Located at:

www.dca.state.ga.us/planning/ocp_rules/minimumtoc.html

Common problems that can delay processing and can result in decertification:

(1) Invalid STWP Timeframe.

The STWP should provide a continuous record, on an annual basis, of the specific actions that the local government intends to take to address the needs and goals identified in its Comprehensive Plan.

This means that there should be no gaps between the years covered by the local government's STWPs since the initial STWP was submitted with the Comprehensive Plan. If a local government is late in submitting a STWP update, the submittal must still include all years needed to maintain continuity. The new STWP update must begin in the first year following the last year of the prior STWP.

(2) Categories for Status of Activities in the *Report of Accomplishments*.

Sometimes STWP update submissions reflect confusion over how many categories are available for reporting the current status of a given activity in the *Report of Accomplishments*. This confusion often results in deficiency citations for minor oversights that do not affect the STWP update but must be corrected, which requires

additional time, effort and paper. There are only four categories as shown below. Each activity should fit into only one category. In addition, three of the four categories have conditions.

Each item in the *Report of Accomplishments* must indicate if it is:

(a) Completed;

The activity has been accomplished. It is done.

(b) Underway;

All or part of the activity is still ongoing. The activity must be included in the new STWP with a projected completion date.

(c) Postponed;

The activity is suspended temporarily but will be resumed at a future date. An explanation of the reason for postponement is required in order for DCA to assess whether funding, training or technical assistance is needed. If the activity is to resume during the period of the new STWP, then the activity must be included in the new STWP.

(d) No longer being considered;

The activity has not been accomplished and has been discontinued by the local government. An explanation of the reason why the activity was not accomplished is required in order for DCA to assess whether funding, training or technical assistance is needed.

Standard Form for *Report of Accomplishments*

Local governments and RDCs use various formats for the *Report of Accomplishments*. In order to facilitate compliance and encourage uniformity, DCA is providing a standard form for the *Report of Accomplishments*. The form may be used by local governments and RDCs as a template for the STWP update, or as a summary sheet attached to a narrative report. This choice might depend on the size and complexity of the update and the original format of the STWP. The categories and conditions are broken out on the form as a useful guide. Some local governments and RDCs already use variations of this form and are encouraged to continue to do so. Others may adopt this form or adapt it according to their needs. The standardized form is an attempt to simplify the *Report of Accomplishments* or, at least, to summarize it, to ensure that all the required elements are addressed in an easily identifiable format that can be quickly reviewed.

(3) Incomplete New Short Term Work Programs.

Each item in the new STWP should include the following elements:

- (a) Time Frames;

Every activity or project must indicate a beginning and an ending date. (It is sufficient to meet this requirement by listing the year(s) that the activity or project covers.)

- (b) Responsible party;

A responsible party can be a City Council or County Commission, local government department or agency, a non-profit organization, etc. Identification of responsible parties in the STWP is required because this encourages the local government to think through and clearly agree upon who will coordinate each task or project and work to move it forward. Assigning responsibility provides accountability and gives the project a much higher chance of successful completion.

and if applicable,

- (c) Cost estimate;

Cost estimates are a required part of the STWP because they help ensure that officials who adopt the work program consider the financial feasibility of the activities they are proposing to undertake.

- (d) Funding source;

Funding sources are required as part of the effort to ensure that the means to accomplish an activity are available.

DCA also has provided a standardized form that can be used or adapted for the new STWP or to summarize it.

- (4) No verification of a transmittal resolution and/or confirmation of a local public hearing.

The review process for a STWP update cannot be completed without the verification or confirmation of a transmittal resolution and a local public hearing. A copy of the transmittal resolution with confirmation of a local public hearing should be included when the STWP update is submitted to the RDC. A transmittal resolution that includes a reference to the public hearing covers it all.

DCA is providing a standard transmittal resolution form that can be utilized by any local governments, although this form or any similar resolution that includes all the necessary information may be used.

Attachments:

- (1) Transmittal Resolution Form
- (2) Annual STWP Update Form
- (3) FiveYear STWP Update Form
- (4) Summary of Report of Accomplishment Form

Reference:

Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning - Chapter 110-12-1.

Appropriate Local Government

RESOLUTION OF SUBMITTAL

WHEREAS, the Appropriate Local Government has completed a Five Year Short Term Work Program for the period 200_ to 200_ .

WHEREAS, this Five Year Short Term Work Program was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and a Public Hearing was held on Appropriate Date, at Appropriate Time in Appropriate Location.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Local Government Council or Commission does hereby submit the Five Year Short Term Work Program 200_ - 200_ to the Appropriate Regional Development Center for Regional review, as per the requirements of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this _____ day of _____.

BY:

ATTEST:

