



PlanFirst Community

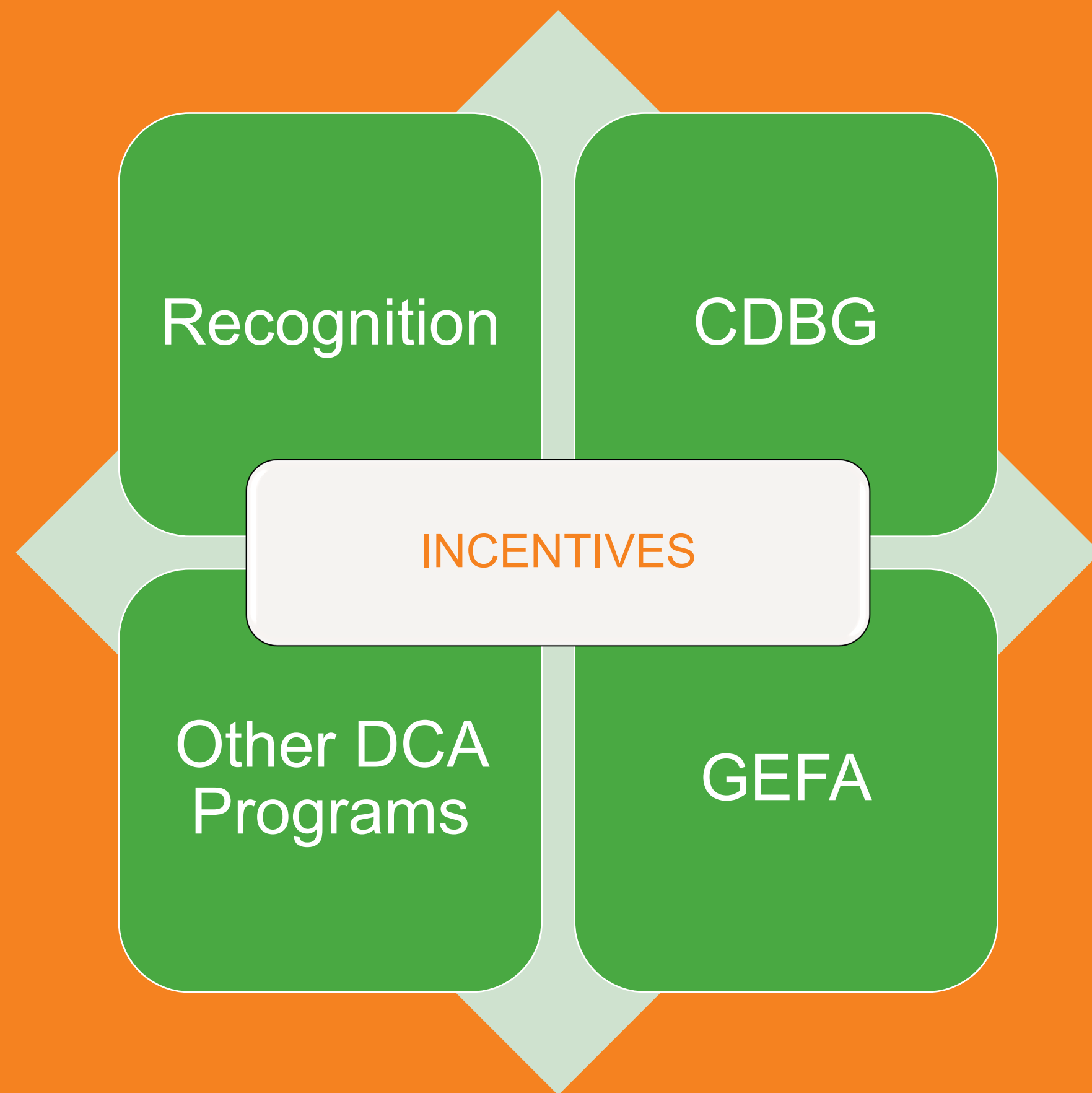
A Program of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs



The PlanFirst Program



PlanFirst Incentives



PlanFirst Program Application – Due May 15, 2021

Introduction: The Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst program recognizes local governments that clearly demonstrate success with implementing their Local Comprehensive Plan. In order to apply for PlanFirst designation, a local government must have participated in at least two Local Comprehensive Plan update cycles, and they must also have Qualified Local Government certification and be current on required reporting to DCA. *(Before you begin the application process, we suggest that you inquire with the Office of Planning at planning@dca.ga.gov regarding your historic performance status and prerequisites. To check your current status, please visit: <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/planners/planreview/default.asp>).*

A multi-agency review panel will evaluate a number of indicators of community success with plan implementation to select communities for this designation. All of these indicators are equally important, but size of the community is taken into consideration in the evaluation so that communities of various sizes are equally competitive for PlanFirst designation.

Instructions: Please answer all the following questions thoroughly, attaching additional pages where necessary, so that the reviewers have sufficient information to measure the success of your Local Comprehensive Plan implementation. Supporting documents might include: news articles, legal ads, lists of attendees, letters of support or other evidence of local involvement and commitment to successful plan implementation activities in your community. *Total application length, including supporting information and support letters, must not exceed 22 pages. Text areas will expand as needed. Please send your application as one document, not to exceed 22 pages. Please do not send separate files.*

Applicant government	
Mailing address	
Telephone	
Email	
Contact person; title	
Application prepared by	
I, the undersigned authorized representative of the applicant, certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is true and correct.	
Name of authorized official signing	
Title of authorized official signing	
Date	
Signature	

The Application Process



FOUR INDICATORS

- Goals
- Leadership
- Participation
- Implementation

Prerequisites

- Applicant has participated in at least 2 Local Comprehensive Plan Update cycles.
- Applicant has a consistent record of maintaining the QLG status and submitting reports to DCA, including the current Report of Local Government Finances & GOMI. Within ten years, the applicant cannot lose status more than twice and/or not more than four weeks collectively (confirm with DCA planning staff at planning@dca.ga.gov).
- Applicant has attained the Minimum Standard for performance as called for in their regional commission's Regional Comprehensive Plan.
- The Work Programs included in the Local Comprehensive Plans consist primarily of specific action items that make it clear exactly what the community intends to do to implement their Local Comprehensive Plan.
- The Applicant is consistently among the top performing local governments within the state for implementation of projects listed in your Local Comprehensive Plan's Community Work Program.





Indicator: Goals

Community and Leadership Support

Ambitious and Achievable

Steer Local Decision Making

Consistent Progress





Indicator: Leadership

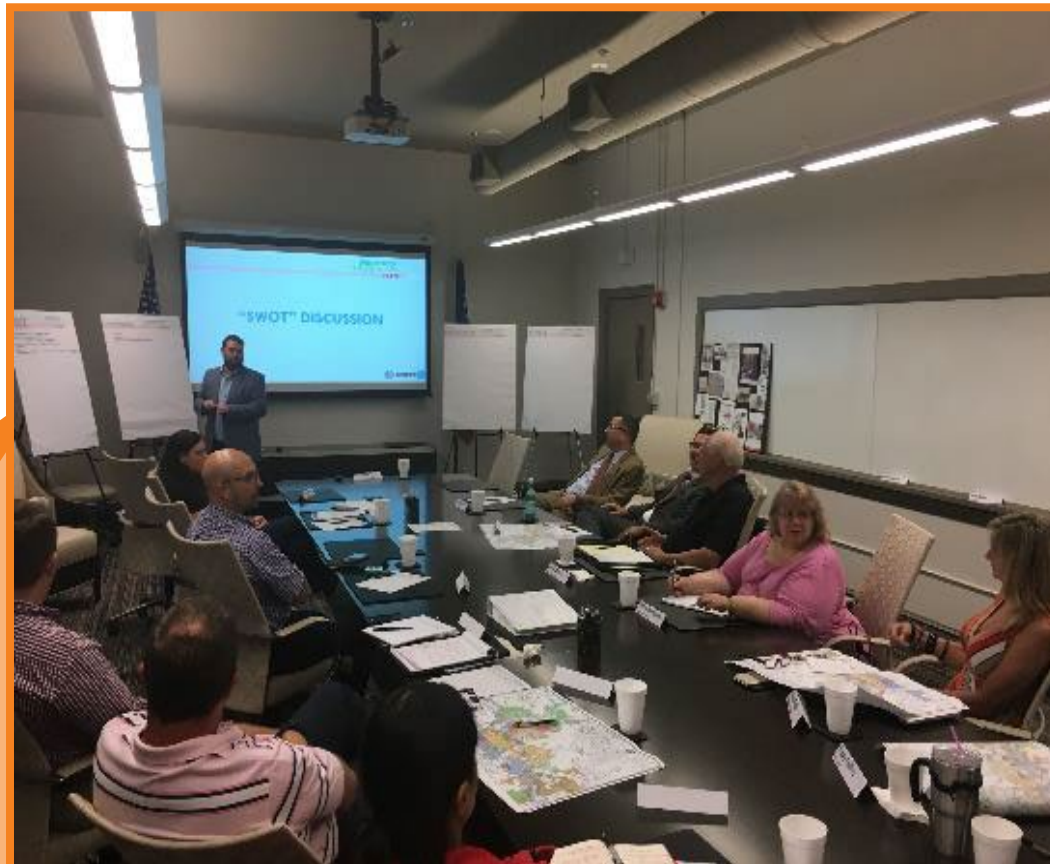
Effective Planning Staff

Active Planning Commission

Effectively Evaluate Planning

Trained Local Officials

Collaborative Partnerships





Indicator: Participation

Lots of Opportunities for Community Input

Community Input Incorporated in Your Plan

Steering Committee Guided Process

Effective Outreach Process

Advocates





Indicators: Implementation

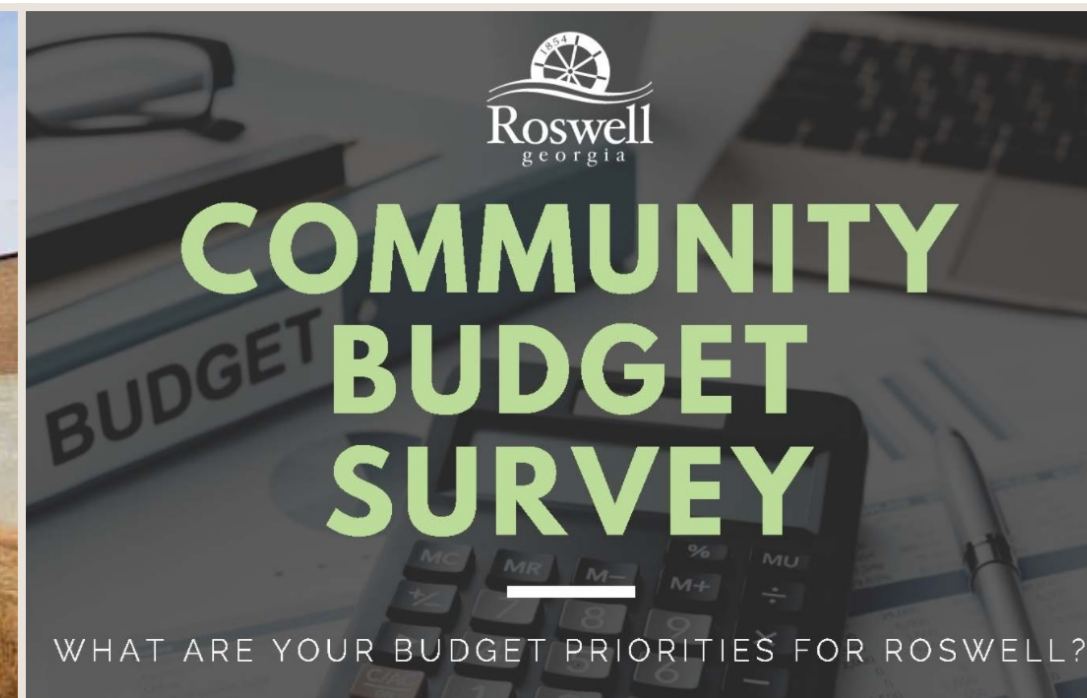
Action Items in Work Program

Work Program Addresses Local Needs

Good Track Record

Consistent Capital Budget

Recent Examples



Lessons Learned: Application

- The answers need to be very specific: answer the question(s) you're asked
- Even planners don't always read instructions
- Include references
- Answers have changed somewhat over the years - focus now is more on how they achieved their goals by planning rather than "Look how great we are"
- Renewals aren't automatic, not everybody renews, for different reasons
- Regional Commissions do a good job completing the application



Lessons Learned: Implementation

“Planning is easy, implementation is the hard part”

- Incentives are a definite plus
- The incentives, like the CDBG grants, help motivate them to complete projects in their Community Work Program
- Tools for implementation are not always utilized, wheels are frequently reinvented
- Reinforces rural communities planning efforts by applying and being strong enough to be designated; they don't always realize how much they've done
- PlanFirst program has 'motivated' communities to finish projects on their short-term program
- Elected leaders are seemingly more fully behind the comp plan because they are a PF community and can access the incentives



What PlanFirst Communities Think

- Size only matters to the small
- Small communities like knowing they are considered just as successful as the larger ones
- Seemingly becoming less about economic development and more about general community planning
- Communities are very excited to share their planning successes with the rest of the state





PlanFirst Communities





Thanks!

Don't forget, applications are due May 15th

Contact Information: @ ebony.simpson@dca.ga.gov

912-663-9865