



CREATE BRIDGES

Before You Begin: Selecting a Region

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN: SELECTING A REGION

OVERVIEW

In this section, we will discuss why the CREATE BRIDGES process utilizes a regional approach to community development, as well as how to select a region to participate in the program. For the purposes of this program, a region is considered to be 2-5 contiguous counties. While the selection process and criteria may vary by state, this information serves as a guide and provides best practices that were developed during Phases I and II of the pilot.

CREATE BRIDGES recognizes that communities are strongest when they work together to share resources and ideas. This sharing increases the capacity of the region and thus helps to ensure stronger and more sustainable outcomes. Particularly when working in rural areas, conducting the program regionally allows for adequate business and employee participation, as well as provides more volunteers and local program leaders.

Purpose: Select a region in your state to participate in CREATE BRIDGES

- Understand why the program uses a regional approach to community development
- Provide an application template and scoring criteria for states to solicit participating regions
- Provide insight into best practices for selecting a region
- Understand how to notify a region and promote the program
- Begin forming the Regional Steering Committee

Goal setting: Determine if the application will be promoted statewide or within only a portion of the state. Identify a goal number of applications to choose from.

Regional Application Information: A regional application template has been provided in the resources section of this curriculum. Details specific to your state, such as eligible counties/region, how to apply, and lead name and contact information can all be customized on this document. Scoring criteria are included in the application but can also be modified to fit your state or funding requirements.

Notifying the Selected Region and Begin Forming the Regional Steering Committee: Once a region is selected, notify the applicants and work with local communications teams to develop a press release. Consider posting information about the program to social media and local news outlets in the region. This will help to advertise the upcoming program to potential steering committee members, local leaders, businesses, and potential volunteers.

During this time, you will begin forming the Regional Steering Committee. Program applicants will serve as the foundation for the committee and others can be added to fill gaps or provide sufficient representation for the region. When building the Regional Steering Committee, include representation

from a broad mix of retail industry stakeholders. Consider individuals from: Economic Development; Education; Workforce Development; Local, Regional and State Government, Non-profits, as well as members to represent the business community and employees. The Regional Steering Committee should also represent the demographics of the region which includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, and age.

Once the initial Regional Steering Committee (RSC) has been selected, the coordinator should host a meeting to cover some of the basic information and answer initial questions. This pre-orientation meeting could be in-person or via Zoom. This meeting is also a good time to cover the Best Practices for Implementation & Sustainability presentation. If there is not sufficient time to cover the full presentation, then at least share the documents with the RSC to be reviewed before the Orientation meeting.

Best Practices:

- Utilize local Extension personnel when reviewing and scoring the applications. They will be essential to providing local insight into the applicants and information provided.
- Consider forming a selection committee that includes state, regional and local partners.
- It is recommended that the CREATE BRIDGES program be conducted in one region per state at a time.

Timeline: This phase of the project should take about 3 months. A sample timeline is included below:

Launch the application phase	June 1
Applications due to state teams	August 3
Recommendations back to the national team	August 14
Select pilot regions	September 1

Promotion:

- Social media
- Press Releases
- Email invites
- Radio ads, etc.

Resources:

- Example Application for Regions

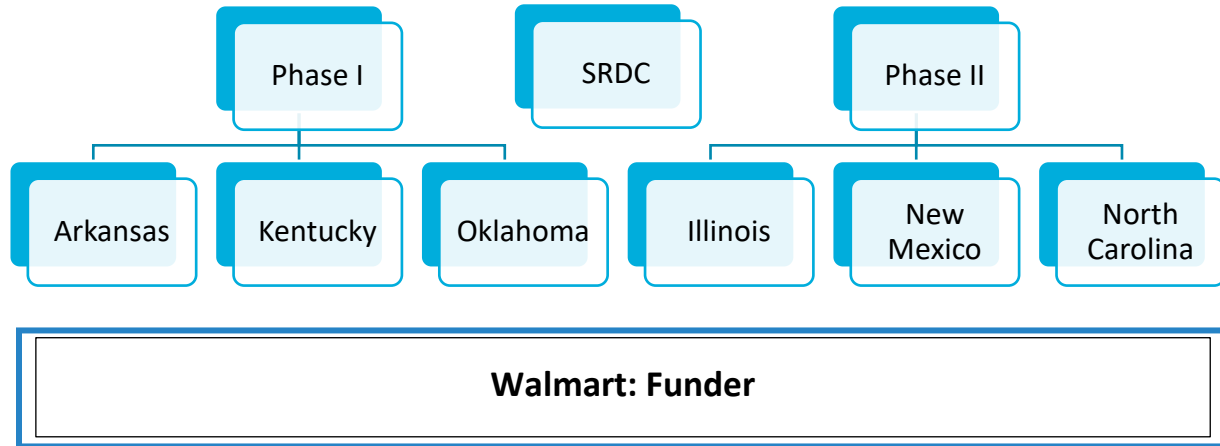
Next Steps:

Following regional selection, the focus should be on building the Regional Steering Committee and planning for the Orientation. You will continue building the Regional Steering Committee through the Orientation phase.

Appendix:

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Project Structure:



Pilot Project Partner Institutions:

Project Coordinator



Phase I



OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SERVICE



Phase II



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



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Special thanks to our funder



This curriculum was made possible through funding by Walmart. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this curriculum are those of the Southern Rural Development Center and its project partners alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Walmart.

This work is supported by 2022-51150-327212 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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