



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING STRATEGIES





Professional Development and Training Strategies

Introduction	4
Training Opportunities	6
Building a Training Strategy	7
Step 1: Assess	8
Step 2: Develop	9
Step 3: Implement	11
Resources and Training Providers.....	12
Appendix A: Completed example of training strategy	14
Appendix B: Blank training strategy templates.....	17

Introduction

RRC Best Practice 4 includes recommendations for identifying, supporting and encouraging professional development and training for development-related staff and officials on a regular basis. Everyone faces constraints on their time and communities have limited funds to support training. This guide has been created to help communities build a strategic approach to training that aligns with its needs as well as time, geographic and budgetary constraints.

RRC Best Practice 4 addresses three concepts which promote strong boards and commissions: recruitment of new members, training and communication. This guide focuses on the training component which is directly addressed in

Best Practices 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3. However, training is interconnected with every expectation within this best practice including setting expectations for new members, providing orientation and holding joint training activities. Before beginning to develop a training strategy, RRC recommends that the community review Best Practice 4 expectations to understand how it all fits together.

The outcome will be different for each community and will vary from year-to-year as a community's priorities evolve. As is the case with all RRC items, RRC planners are always available to provide feedback and help as needed.

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.1.1

The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The community outlines expectations and desired skill-sets for open seats.
- ☐ The community has clearly documented the process for board and commission appointments.
- ☐ Board and commission applications are available online.

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.1.2

The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development-related boards and commissions.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The orientation packet includes all relevant planning, zoning and development information.

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.2.1

The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The community has a training budget allocated for elected and appointed officials and staff.

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.2.2

The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance for elected and appointed officials and staff.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The community manages a simple tracking mechanism for logging individual training needs and attendance.
- ☐ The community identifies trainings that assist in accomplishing their stated goals and objectives.

Introduction

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.2.3

The community encourages elected and appointed officials and staff to attend trainings.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The community has an established process to notify its elected and appointed officials and staff about training opportunities.

EVALUATION CRITERIA 4.2.4

The community shares information between elected and appointed officials and staff.

EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ The community holds collaborative work sessions, including joint trainings on development topics.
- ☐ Training participants share information with those not in attendance.
- ☐ The planning commission prepares an annual report for the governing body.

Training Opportunities

Redevelopment Ready Communities® live in a golden age of training opportunities with a plethora of free materials available online including webinars, articles, podcasts and online groups for common interests. In fact, there's so much that it can be overwhelming to determine which may be the best resources and opportunities to fit a community's specific needs.

Examples of training opportunities include:

- Reviewing existing plans and strategies (master plan, downtown plan, etc.)
- Walking tours of a local area, business or organization
- Field trips to other nearby communities
- Webinars

- Articles, blogs and books
- Podcasts
- In-house presentations from local, regional, or state partners
- One-day workshops
- Mentorship
- Evening workshops
- Multi-day conferences

An extensive list of training providers and resources can be found beginning on page 12, but the graphic below provides an idea of the many opportunities available to communities to build a customized training strategy.



Building a Training Strategy

Building a training strategy can be a simple three-step process



ASSESS

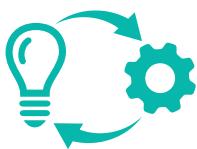
Figure out the community's current status.

Each of these steps is discussed in greater detail throughout this guide. RRC recommends that a training strategy be developed at the board level with active participation from board members, but this could also be done on an individual basis or as a staff exercise.



PLAN

Identify goals and determine the best way for the community to reach those goals.



IMPLEMENT

Identify how to turn the desired actions into reality.

Step 1: Assess the community's current status

Like almost any other process, the first step in building a customized training strategy is to assess the community's current status when it comes to how it handles training for staff and officials.

Questions to consider (most, but not all, will apply to every community):

- Who is on the board and how long have they been there? What is their background?
- What training has each official and/or staff person done in the past?
- What major projects does the community have coming up in the next year or two that may require some outreach and education on?
- Are there specific topics the board has expressed an interest in learning more about?
- Are there non-technical skills such as public speaking, meeting facilitation, etc., that individuals may benefit from, not only for this position but also in their full-time role or other positions?
- What challenges is the community facing that training and education could help it overcome?
- Does the community have a training requirement for appointed officials or staff?
- Are there any standard training events for local staff and/or officials such as annual ethics training?
- What is the current training budget? Any expected changes in the upcoming year?
- Are there local or regional partners who can assist with training?
- What are the challenges that prevent officials from attending training?
- Are there any incentives that could be developed to encourage training?
- How do officials currently find out about training?
- Does the community currently track training attendance?

Appendix A includes a completed sample assessment form for the fictitious community of Cityville. Appendix B includes a blank template form. For a Microsoft Word file that can be downloaded and customized, visit the RRC library at www.miplace.org/rrclibrary.

TIP: Open the community's plans (master plan, downtown plan, strategic plan, etc.) to see what projects are coming up.

Step 2: Develop the strategy

Once the community has assessed its current status, it has nearly all the information it needs to build a short, customized plan. RRC recommends that this be updated annually, but it could cover a shorter or longer period depending on the community's needs. Again, Appendix A includes a continuation of the Cityville example and Appendix B includes a sample training plan template that can be customized to fit the community's needs. To develop the plan, consider the following actions:

- Based on the assessment, what are the board's major goals for training?
- What actions will help the community meet those goals?
- What is the best delivery method?
- What does a general schedule look like?
- What is the expected cost? Does it fit within the community's training budget?

CREATING GOALS

The purpose of any strategy is to meet actionable goals—otherwise the organization is just planning to plan. Keeping the community's training goals straightforward and simple will help shape the rest of the strategy.

Examples:

- Help new members get up-to-speed on their responsibilities as planning commissioners.
- Increase understanding of new zoning concepts in preparation for a zoning ordinance update next year.
- Meet the city's annual requirement for ethics training.
- Conduct at least one joint training.
- Build understanding of the community's efforts to achieve Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) certification.
- Expand officials' understanding of economic development incentives and how they work.

DETERMINING ACTIONS (Implementing strategy)

This is at the heart of the training strategy—how the community will achieve its goals. The goals should be somewhat specific to provide guidance but not so specific as to preclude unexpected opportunities which may arise that could better meet the community's goals.

Some examples include:

- New members (within the past year) will complete MSU Citizen Planner online.
- One planning commissioner will attend the annual planning conference.
- Conduct a joint training on conflict of interest and ethics with planning commission, downtown development authority (DDA), council, parks and recreation and any other boards

- Encourage at least two additional commission members to complete the RRC trainings.
- Identify articles on new zoning techniques to include in meeting packets each month.
- Arrange for some type of remote training on economic development incentives or ask MEDC to come speak.

DELIVERING TRAINING

Two of the most common constraints to training are a lack of time and a lack of funds. Appointed officials are volunteers and have lives outside of their community role and traveling to a conference and staying overnight can quickly deplete a community's training budget. As such, finding time or money to go to multiday conferences or even midday webinars can be difficult for many. An effective training strategy will keep this in mind and identify delivery options that match available time/funds.

In general, training delivery options fall into five main categories (see below). Keep in mind that some officials may have more time, interest and personal resources than others which could allow them to still experience the more time-consuming opportunities others might not be able to do.



Step 2: Develop the strategy *cont.*

CREATING A GENERAL SCHEDULE

The best laid plans can be interrupted by unexpected events but building out a general idea of when the community hopes to take each action will help keep things on track. RRC recommends a quarterly schedule. It allows natural opportunities to assess if the community is on track to meet its goals without being burdensome.

An example schedule might look like this:

FIRST QUARTER (JUL–SEP)	SECOND QUARTER (OCT–DEC)	THIRD QUARTER (JAN–MAR)	FOURTH QUARTER (APR–JUN)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly articles• Planning Michigan Conference (1 person)• MSU Citizen Planner (2 people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article• RRC Best Practice training (2 people)• Ethics/conflict of interest joint training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article• Economic development incentives training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article

FUNDING TRAINING

RRC Best Practices don't set a certain amount of funding that should be allocated to training but do look to see some type of financial support to demonstrate that the community values training. Many communities understandably have very small budgets for such activities.

RRC encourages the community to build a strategy before a budget is adopted so each board can make a specific budget request for training. Having a documented strategy can help build the case for that ask. In some cases, the budget may already be established, and the strategy should work within those existing parameters.

EXTERNAL SOURCES OF FUNDS

While the community's budget may not support extensive training, several organizations offer scholarship opportunities to help supplement local funding. Some Michigan-specific sources include:

- **John Barr Leadership Education Scholarship (Michigan Municipal League (MML) Foundation):** The scholarship offers five yearly one-time scholarships of up to \$1,000 for training that provides local elected and appointed officials the knowledge and skills they need to lead and govern their communities. The training may not be partisan.
- **Tim Doyle Scholarship Fund (MML Foundation):** The Tim Doyle Scholarship Fund helps provide access to the most critical information for newly elected officials through the Elected Officials Academy (EOA) Core Weekender seminar. There they can learn about financial management, leadership skills, legal issues and planning and zoning.
- **Elected and Appointed Officials Scholarship Program (Michigan Association of Planning [MAP]):** Scholarship recipients can select from a variety of MAP services, including workshops, books and publications, or even choose to apply the value of the scholarship toward the MAP Annual Conference. Scholarship values range from \$500 to \$1,500 per community, to be applied to the training and resources that the community has identified would meet their unique training and information needs.
- **Professional Training Scholarship (MAP—members only):** Created to address the educational and training needs of professional planners, zoning administrators, building officials and other positions related to planning and service to the planning profession in Michigan. Professional Planner Scholarship applications will be received throughout the year. Recipients can select from a variety of MAP programs: Transportation Bonanza, MAP Annual Conference, MAP Spring Institute and other professional development events not yet scheduled.
- **MEDA Scholarship (Michigan Economic Development Association [MEDA]—members only):** Scholarships will be provided for education/training specifically in the area of economic development (training outside of economic development will not be accepted). Priority will be given to MEDA training. Requests made for training outside of MEDA will only be excepted if MEDA does not offer the same type of training. A 25 percent match is required, and each person can receive a maximum of \$750 per fiscal year.

Step 3: Implement the plan

Once a strategy is in place, it's time to implement! While implementation will look different for every community, common items to consider include:

- Who will be tasked with advocating for the plan's implementation?
- How will the community ensure officials are reminded of training opportunities?
- How will training participation (attendance) be tracked?
- How will the community encourage sharing training outcomes with those who couldn't attend?

Examples of training activities practiced by Redevelopment Ready Communities:

- Training added to all agendas as a standing item to encourage regular reminders and report outs from those who attended recent training events.
- Training policy established for boards and commissions

including items such as minimum training attendance goals, how to ask for funds, reporting out after events, etc. This could be a stand-alone policy or part of the board's bylaws.

- Training materials and reminders included in meeting packets.
- Excel spreadsheet or other method created to track attendance at training events (see the RRC library for examples).
- Joint training held to not only promote training but also to encourage communication between boards—it also helps the community meet Best Practice 4.2.4.
- A section included on training in the community's planning commission annual report to highlight attendance, new information and future goals for the upcoming year.

TIP: This could be a good opportunity for the board chair or another active member to take a lead role.

Resources and Training Providers

Michigan is fortunate to have numerous statewide and regional organizations providing training opportunities. Additionally, there are countless organizations at the national and international levels that can provide valuable training opportunities.

The following list is not exhaustive but aims to provide a foundation for identifying organizations and opportunities which a community might use for training needs.

MICHIGAN-SPECIFIC RESOURCES AND PROVIDERS

These organizations are based right here in Michigan and provide general planning, zoning, economic and community development information. Many also offer online learning opportunities such as webinars.

Michigan Association of Planning (MAP)

www.planningmi.org

MAP provides numerous training opportunities for both member and non-member communities including its annual Planning Michigan Conference (usually September), off-site workshops throughout the state, on-site workshops upon request, meet-up opportunities, publications and a planning magazine focused on Michigan issues.

Michigan Municipal League (MML) www.mml.org

As the leading advocacy organization for Michigan's incorporated communities, MML provides a wide array of training opportunities including an annual convention (usually September), Capital Conference, Elected Officials Academy, legislative advocacy events, on-site workshops and free publications.

Michigan Economic Developers Association (MEDA)

www.medaweb.org

With over 500 members, MEDA exists to advance economic development throughout Michigan, and increase the individual member's effectiveness in the economic development profession. The association's goal is to provide a variety of services and programs that will enhance ability and skills in economic development. The group sponsors in-person trainings, an annual meeting/conference and advocacy events. Their website also contains general information on economic development. While MEDA is a membership organization, non-members are welcome to attend most events.

Michigan Township Association (MTA)

www.michigantownships.org

Michigan's 1,240 townships cover 96 percent of the state's land area and provide essential services to 51 percent of the state's population. MTA provides training and information essential for today's local leaders in providing effective, efficient programs and services. Offerings include an eLearning library, publications, annual conference(s) and in-person workshops.

Michigan State University Extension-Planning

www.canr.msu.edu/planning/index

MSU Extension offers training courses on planning and zoning tools, policy options, land use and environmental issues. All services are available to Michigan's 1,858 municipalities, 14 multi-county regions, 12 federally recognized tribal nations. One of the most popular programs offered through MSU Extension is the Citizen Planner program, which can be done in-person or online.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

MEDC's Community Development division (www.miplace.org) is dedicated to supporting vibrant, diverse and sustainable communities through both financial incentives and technical assistance. Offerings include in-person training events, workshops, webinars and online resources. MEDC's Business Development division also offers in-person sessions on economic development tools. Learn more about those tools and see future sessions at www.michiganbusiness.org.

Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) www.cedamichigan.org

CEDAM offers a variety of signature training events customized to fit the needs of the community economic development industry. Events include the Building Michigan Conference (each spring), Real Estate Development Bootcamp, poverty simulations, advocacy information and webinars.

Michigan Downtown Association (MDA)

www.michigandowntowns.com

MDA a statewide, nonprofit organization and a driving force in the interest and growth of downtowns and communities throughout Michigan. The MDA encourages the development, redevelopment and continuing improvement of Michigan communities and downtowns. Training opportunities include an annual conference (each fall), a state legislative advocacy day and general online resources.

Resources and Training Providers *cont.*

OTHER RESOURCES AND PROVIDERS

While not Michigan-specific, communities will still find lots of great information from these planning and economic development-related organizations.

- 880 Cities: www.880cities.org
- American Planning Association (APA): www.planning.org
- AARP Livable Communities:
www.aarp.orglivable-communities/
- Congress for New Urbanism (CNU): www.cnu.org
- CityLab: www.citylab.com
- Form Based Code Institute (FBCI):
www.formbasedcodes.org
- International City Managers Association (ICMA):
www.icma.org
- International Downtown Association:
www.downtown.org
- International Economic development Council:
www.iedconline.org
- National Development Council: www.ndconline.org
- National League of Cities (NLC): www.nlc.org
- National Main Street Program: www.mainstreet.org
- Planetizen: www.planetizen.com
- Recast City: www.recastcity.com
- Smart Growth America (SGA):
www.smartgrowthamerica.org
- Strong Towns: www.strongtowns.org
- Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (US EDA):
www.eda.gov

Appendix A: Completed example of training strategy

SCENARIO: CITYVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Congratulations, you're now the liaison to the planning commission for City of Cityville (population: 8,500). The planning commission is made up of five community members with varying backgrounds. Cityville is experiencing increasing interest from developers and an influx of younger residents. Rents are rising and there is a push by the newcomers for walkability and pedestrian-friendly upgrades, housing density, new housing types and green infrastructure. These topics were incorporated into a newly updated master plan (2018) and the city is ready to begin implementation, starting with a major zoning ordinance overhaul this year.

The city is mostly built out but there are several vacant buildings downtown and an underutilized parking lot that needs to be reactivated. Cityville is also facing issues regarding conflicts of interest due to a recent land sale and is working its way through the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program.

The city has a small budget for training, but it will be drained if it sends two commissioners to the major annual conference. The commission's by-laws are silent on training requirements though the city does require some type of annual ethics training for all local officials. The city is a member of the region 7 planning agency, known affectionately as the Awesome Collaborative, which has a staff member dedicated to offering regular training events for members.

Alex Bartlett, District 1 (Term ends: 03/31/2022)

Chair: long serving (appointed 2004) but new as chair, homeowner and resident. Alex works from home as a lead marketing specialist for technology company Widgets Galore. He completed MSU's Citizen Planner about six years ago and is not afraid to share his opinion on items before the commission. Past trainings include: Citizen Planner (2006); Planning Conference (2008); Site Plan Review (2014); Ethics Training (2016); RRC Best Practices (2016).

Johann Cohn, District 2 (Term ends: 03/31/2022)

Vice Chair: long serving (1999–present), lawyer, friends with the Mayor. Johann's legal specialty is patent law. When Johann first started on the commission, they took in every training opportunity possible but in recent years family circumstances have limited their involvement in planning commission activities outside of the regular meetings. Johann was the chair before stepping down last year into the vice chair position. Past trainings include: Planning Conference (2000, 2008, 2014); Site Plan Review (2014); Ethics Training (2016).

Ashlyn Heald, District 3 (Term ends: 03/31/2023):

Appointed last year (2018), first government board experience, downtown renter, doesn't drive. Degree in landscape architecture. Ashlyn works as a junior designer at a small downtown architecture firm, Cityville Design. The firm is owned by a longtime community member who used a façade grant program to upgrade its downtown building three years ago. The firm is currently adding new staff and looking to expand its office space. The firm wants to stay downtown but has maximized its first-floor space and parking could be an issue. It has had preliminary discussions about expanding into the currently vacant second-story of the building. Early estimates are that the project has a substantial financial gap and would require support from the city/state. Ashley has expressed interest in Citizen Planner. Past trainings include: RRC Best Practices Online (2019), partial

Dale Miller, District 4 (Term ends: 03/31/2021)

Newer member (appointed in 2015, but regularly misses meetings), works as a general contractor. Heavily focused on building details and financial feasibility of projects that come before the planning commission. Has expressed an interest in going to the state planning conference this year. Dale typically doesn't prioritize training as something worth his time. Dale is also on the DDA. Past trainings include: Ethics training (2016)

Andi Hollender, At-large (Term ends: 03/31/2021)

Appointed to the planning commission as the city council liaison since 2017. Works as an urban planner for a nonprofit in Dollarville, about a 20-minute commute. As a council member, Andi has pushed hard for non-motorized transportation options throughout the city, including a new complete streets policy (passed earlier this year). Andi provides updates to council on planning commission activities on a regular basis and is the go-to for questions on budget requests from the commission. Andi has expressed passing interest in Citizen Planner. Past trainings include: MML Elected Officials Academy (2017).

Appendix A: Completed example of training strategy

Cityville Planning Commission

TRAINING ASSESSMENT

BOARD/COMMISSION: Cityville planning commission

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY			
NAME	ROLE	APPOINTED	PAST TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS
Alex Bartlett	Chair	2004	Citizen Planner (2006); Planning Conference (2008); Site Plan Review (2014); Ethics Training (2016); RRC Best Practices (2016)
Johann Cohn	Vice Chair	1999	Planning Conference (2000, 2008, 2014); Site Plan Review (2014); Ethics Training (2016)
Ashlyn Heald	Member	2018	RRC Best Practices Online (2019); partial
Dale Miller	Member	2015	Ethics Training (2016)
Andi Hollender	Member, City Liaison	2017	MML Elected Officials Academy (2017)

UPCOMING PROJECTS/HOT TOPICS

- Zoning ordinance updates
- Activation of the underutilized downtown parking lot
- Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure
- Green infrastructure
- Housing diversity
- Redevelopment Ready Communities®
- Conflict of interest

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Ashlyn and Harold could both benefit from Citizen Planner and are interested, based on conversations.
- The expected budget is \$1,000 total.
- MML and MAP offer training scholarships each year which could expand training capacity.
- The regional planning organization offers numerous free training events, webinars and documents each year, though they don't often fit smaller communities like Cityville.
- The more people who are trained in RRC, the more people there are to help with items.
- City policy is for all officials and staff to undergo ethics training each year.
- The city needs to begin holding an annual joint meeting to meet RRC Best Practices.

TRAINING DELIVERY METHODS:

Conferences, webinars/online, articles, in-house events, tours

EXPECTED BUDGET: \$1,000

Appendix A: Completed example of training strategy

Cityville Planning Commission

TRAINING PLAN

PERIOD: FY2020 (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020)

STAFF CONTACT: Miranda Miser

ASSESSMENT: See attached

GOALS

- Help new members get up-to-speed on their responsibilities as planning commissioners
- Prepare the planning commission for a zoning ordinance update next year
- Build understanding for Redevelopment Ready Communities' work
- Meet the city's requirement for annual ethics training
- Conduct at least one joint training

ACTIONS

- Ashlyn and Andi will complete MSU Citizen Planner Online (\$)
- Budget for one commissioner to attend annual planning conference in Unicornville (\$)
- Include short articles in each monthly packet; reserve 10 minutes for discussion of the article at the end of each meeting (ask members to rotate identifying an article)
- Conduct a joint training on conflict of interest and ethics with the planning commission, downtown development authority (DDA), council, parks and rec, and any other boards (Michigan Municipal League [MML] ethics training)
- Encourage at least two additional commission members to complete the RRC trainings (in-person or online) (potential \$)
- Conduct a joint training with the planning commission, DDA and council on downtown redevelopment (ask Michigan Economic Development Corporation [MEDC] for assistance on this)

GENERAL SCHEDULE

FIRST QUARTER (Jul–Sep)	SECOND QUARTER (Oct–Dec)	THIRD QUARTER (Jan–Mar)	FOURTH QUARTER (Apr–Jun)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly articles• Planning Michigan Conference (1)• MSU Citizen Planner (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article• RRC Best Practice Training (2)• Ethics/conflict of interest joint training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article• Downtown redevelopment joint training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly article

BUDGET

ITEM	PROJECTED COST
MSU Citizen Planner Online	\$275 x 2
Planning Conference	\$300 (Reg); \$400 (Travel)
RRC Best Practices	\$50 (Mileage)
TOTAL	\$1,350

Appendix B: Blank training strategy templates

Training Assessment:

Board/Commission:

Staff Contact:

Membership Summary:

Name	Role	Appointed	Past Training Highlights

Upcoming Projects / Hot Topics:

- [Add projects the board plans to work on in the next 1-2 years]
- [Add topics of interest that board members or plans have identified as priorities]

Other Considerations:

- [Think about things like budget constraints, informal conversations, events that other boards are doing, etc.]

Training Delivery Methods:

- [Identify priorities here: Conferences, webinars/online, articles, in-house events, tours]

Expected Budget: [Give an estimation – likely based on the current year's budget]

Appendix B: Blank training strategy templates

Training Plan:

Period:

Staff Contact:

Assessment Results:

[Take note of any key takeaways from the assessment component – or just attach it directly]

Goals

- *[Add 3-5 goals for the upcoming period]*

Actions

- *[Based on the goals above, add quantifiable actions]*

General Schedule

First Quarter (J-S)	Second Quarter (O-D)	Third Quarter (J-M)	Fourth Quarter (A-J)

Budget

Item	Projected Cost
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL	\$



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Dedicated to shared economic success, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation promotes the state's assets and opportunities that support business investment and community vitality. The MEDC's business assistance programs and services connect companies with people, resources, partners, and access to capital.