The Urban Sustainability Accelerator (USA) at Portland State University is offering a year of professional advice and assistance to teams from states, regions, cities, counties or townships that want to promote the construction of accessory dwelling units (also called granny flats, in-law apartments, basement apartments, alley flats, backyard cottages, etc.).

This year-long assistance program will help communities address these kinds of questions:

➢ What changes to local zoning codes have been most effective in encouraging construction of ADUs?

➢ How do you overcome opposition to ADUs and associated changes to single-family zoning?

➢ How much will ADUs cost to build, and who will build them?

➢ What can be done to equip and encourage homeowners to build ADUs?

➢ Who will rent ADUs, and how much should they expect to pay?

➢ Will ADUs be used primarily for short-term rentals, and if so, what can or should be done about that?

➢ What can be done to make ADUs affordable to renters of modest means and how does that integrate with other efforts to provide affordable housing?

➢ Can ADUs be deployed to address equity issues, including aging-in-place and ADA-accountability goals?

➢ What are the environmental benefits of ADUs and how can these be enhanced?

USA plans to launch the year of assistance in the summer of 2018 with a cohort of four to six teams. A description of what constitutes a team and responses to other frequently asked questions follow.
Frequently Asked Questions about the Urban Sustainability Accelerator’s Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Assistance Program

1. How does the Urban Sustainability Accelerator work?

The Urban Sustainability Accelerator (USA) is a joint program of Portland State University’s Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning and the Institute for Sustainable Solutions. USA was created to fill a need not met by policy-oriented conferences and workshops: namely, hands-on assistance over the course of an entire year to help implement new and existing sustainability policies, plans and goals.

The USA program is built around providing expert assistance to teams of people from the same urban area who work in government, business, nonprofits, and often a local university.

We have worked with teams from throughout the U.S. – from Sacramento, CA to Portland, ME with many places in between such as Waco, TX, Louisville, KY, Wichita, KS, and Duluth, MN. Our geographical focus has ranged in scale from the state of California to a single site in a small rural community.

USA selects only those topics for which we can provide substantial expert assistance, tailored to teach team’s needs. Past programs have focused on implementing plans and policies around urban infill and redevelopment, regional growth management, compact development, active transportation, cost-effective transportation investments, green infrastructure, and transportation impact assessment, including relevant modeling and analysis.

Over the course of five years we have continually improved our program model, based on evaluations provided by our participants. Here are some participant comments:

Waco has benefitted tremendously from our participation in the USA. Robert, his team, and the resources made available to us over the past year have been invaluable to our community’s effort to advance our downtown revitalization initiatives.

- Chris McGowan, Waco, TX

Wichita’s participation in the inaugural cohort of the Urban Sustainability Accelerator has been extremely rewarding…. The sessions attended, tours, and contacts made with members of other cohorts have proven invaluable, in particular related to food trucks, bike lanes, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and complete streets.

- Scott Knebel, Wichita, KS

The USA has been of tremendous value to Elk Grove. With limited staff time and dollars, the City could not have afforded to pay for the expertise and experience available through the
PSU staff and the private sector advisors they made available through the USA. We would have never been able to find them let alone pay for their time and expertise!

- Randy Starbuck, Elk Grove, CA

Portland, Maine, has benefitted greatly from the partnership with Portland State University and the USA program.... [W]e have been able to bring national experts to the "older" Portland to help us work on issues related to urban living and growing sustainably. We have also been able to visit sites in the "younger" Portland to learn from some of the innovative development that has taken place there. We would seriously consider participation in a future cohort!

- Jeff Levine, Portland, ME

2. How is the assistance organized and delivered during the cohort year?

The USA program is built around a few organizing principles:

A) Multi-sector implementation teams

Assistance is provided via implementation teams representing the various local organizations and interests necessary to implement a designated policy, plan or concept. These teams can represent any geographic scale, from a neighborhood to a state, and may consist of up to 25 people. In larger teams, a subset of three to six members should be identified as the team leadership.

In the case of ADUs, implementation teams would likely include most of the following:

- An elected official from the governing body of an agency that regulates ADUs and/or can provide incentives to promote their construction.
- Senior government staff responsible for ADU policy execution.
- A financial institution (bank, savings & loan) that currently finances ADUs via home equity lines of credit, mortgage refinancing or construction loans, or that wishes to.
- An architect or designer.
- General contractor(s) or developer(s) who build or wish to build ADUs.
- A realtor who understands or wants to better understand the role of ADUs in the housing market he/she serves.
- A director or senior staff person from a housing advocacy organization that wants to promote ADUs as part of a housing strategy.
- The director or senior staff person from a smart growth organization.
- University faculty member(s) specializing in issues related to housing who might be interested in helping to carry out related research

B) Team-developed work plans, carried out over the course of a year

The implementation teams begin by agreeing on what they want to accomplish in the course of a year. This will become the basis for a work plan identifying desired work products and
outcomes, participants, budgets, activities and the specific assistance they would like USA to provide. Work plans are usually updated at least once midway through the program.

In the case of an implementation assistance program focused on ADUs, the teams might choose to work on any or all of the following activities:

- Revising local regulatory codes.
- Educating elected officials about the whys and hows of ADUs.
- Understanding and addressing neighborhood concerns about ADUs and other infill.
- Helping interested homeowners understand the rewards, risks and details related to finance and design and management of an ADU.
- Helping planning staff with ADU permit administration.
- Mapping sites suitable for ADUs.
- Educating and engaging financial institutions, design professionals and contractors.
- Exploring policy interventions and incentives that will increase the likelihood of ADUs being deployed in ways that provide other social and environmental benefits including a supply of (more) affordable housing.

C) A cohort made up of four to six implementation teams

USA groups four to six teams from different places but working on the same theme – in this case, promoting ADU development – into a cohort. The cohort structure provides an opportunity for peer learning between localities and for the efficient delivery of expert advice.

3. What does the schedule look like over the year?

A two-to-four-month preparation phase precedes the beginning of the assistance program. During this phase USA staff visit local sites to learn about current conditions and issues, meet and help recruit team members, and discuss the draft work plan and the program for the initial convening.

The year of assistance then begins in earnest with an initial convening of four to six team members from each team in the cohort. They meet at Portland State University during the summer for three days. The convening combines a specially-designed mix of expert presentations, site visits/tours and informal discussions with team bonding over meals. It concludes with each team refining and sharing its work plan with
the group and discussing how their parallel efforts can be coordinated by USA, and how to share useful results between teams.

Thereafter the teams return to their communities and execute their work plans with assistance from USA experts. Depending on team needs and funding, the program may include a midyear gathering at which representatives of the teams share their progress, receive additional expert advice and adjust their work plans for the remainder of the program year.

The year concludes with two to three representatives from each team reconvening in Portland for two days to share what they have learned and to evaluate the USA program. Team members not in Portland may participate in parts of the reconvening via video conference.

For the ADU cohort and other 2018-19 cohorts, the initial convening will take place during the summer of 2018 with the concluding convening the following summer. Convenings usually take place in early July, but the schedule can be adjusted to the needs of the teams in the cohort.

4. How is the expert advice provided?

USA relies on a mix of paid, discounted and donated expert help to deliver assistance during the program year. This assistance may take many forms, including:

- Site visits by experts who make public presentations and have private meetings.
- Short commissioned research reports on best practices.
- Web-based advising by experts.
- Best practice memos.
- Tailored webinars for a team and its community.
- Educational activities and small conferences or other educational events.
- Assistance in organizing ADU tours for the team’s community.
- Educational field trips to sites in Portland or other locations.

5. How much expert advice is provided?

For the standard fee each team in a cohort of five teams can expect to receive about 200 to 300 hours of expert assistance. This includes 100 to 200 hours of group assistance at the convenings and through various teleconferences or webinars plus an additional 75 to 100 hours of tailored assistance to help each team carry out its work plan.

It is common for teams to decide to request additional assistance above what is covered by the standard fee. The cost for that additional assistance depends entirely on the nature of the help requested.

6. Who are the experts?

We have more than 100 USA Expert Advisers who provide sustainability advice on specialized topics. Please ask us for our list of experts specializing in ADUs.
7. How much does the program cost, what do participants get in return, and who pays for it?

The fee is $30,000 per team* assuming there are at least five teams in the cohort (since fixed costs are about $150,000).

Team fees are paid variously by a team sponsor (such as a government agency), team members or their organizations, and/or foundations or donors. USA will work with your team on any local grant requests to support your program participation.

Here is an estimated breakdown of the value each team receives for its $30,000 fee*:

**Expert Advising**  
$20,000  200 hours of paid and donated expert advice shared among teams at $100/hour  
$8,000  80 hours of team-specific expert advising at $100/hour

**USA Staff Assistance**  
$11,000  Staff time organizing teams, helping develop team work plans, and coordinating and delivering assistance over the course of the year  
$3,000  Staff time and travel expenses for preparatory meetings at team location

**Team Travel**  
$5,000  Travel, food and lodging for up to five members attending convening  
$2,000  Travel, food and lodging for two team members attending re-convening

**Other**  
$9,000  Portland State University accounting services, insurance, facilities, etc.

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$58,000  Total value per team (for your $30,000 participation fee*)

*Estimated fee for the 2018-19 ADU cohort, subject to adjustment.

8. What is the next step if we are considering participation?

The USA welcomes opportunities to discuss this program and answer your questions about participation. Please contact Molly Baer Kramer at m.kramer@pdx.edu.

After a commitment is made to participate in the cohort, USA will work with your team to schedule a visit by USA director Robert Liberty, who will help with the additional team assembly, as needed, and the formulation of an initial work plan.