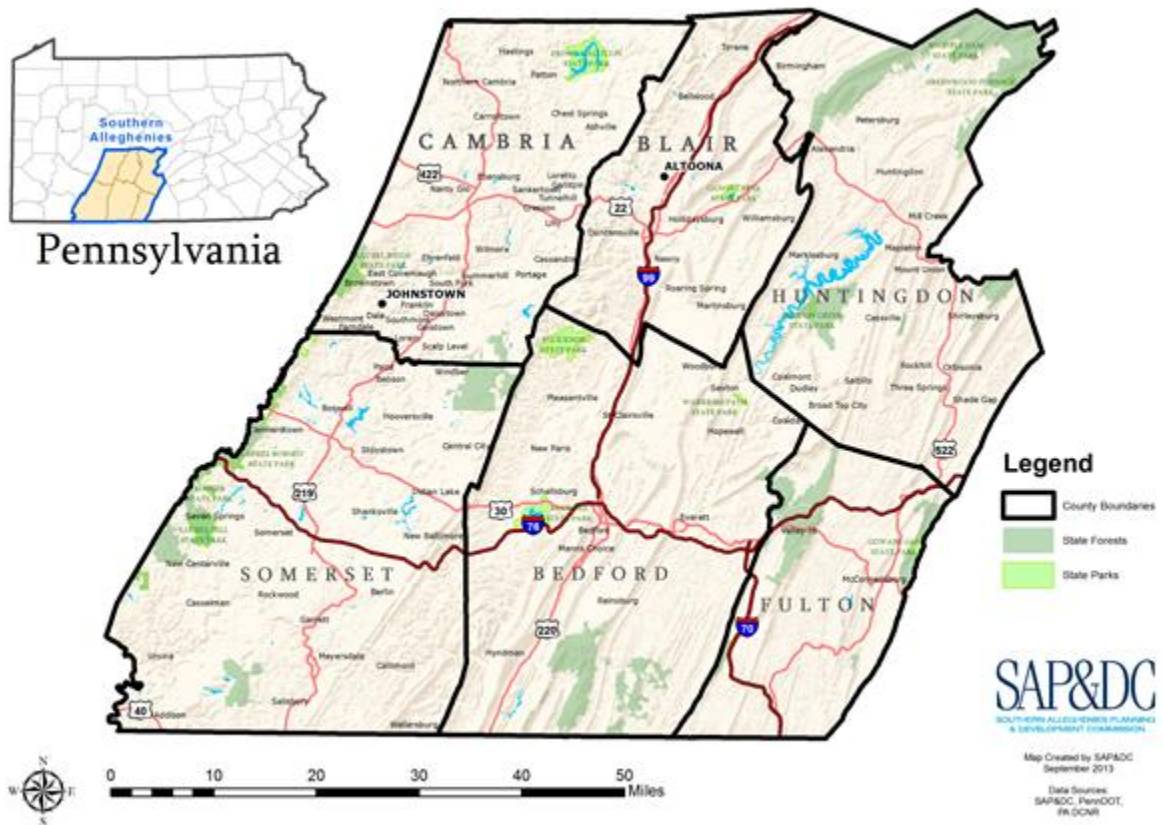


Southern Alleghenies Regional Housing Strategy

Request for Proposals

Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission

3 Sheraton Drive • Altoona, Pennsylvania • 16601



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I. General Guidelines

Introduction

Housing has been a crucial issue for the Southern Alleghenies region for several decades. The Region has long suffered from a lack of affordable, high-quality market rate housing, especially new single-family homes, that meet the needs of both homeowners and renters. A large number of blighted properties, both residential and industrial, continue to hamper housing and development efforts. Middle class residents have been particularly impacted by rising home prices, increasing rental rates, and a lack of affordable market rate housing in the Region. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has also given rise to a hybrid workplace model in which employees work both remotely from home and in-office, which has greatly impacted national and regional migration patterns and housing demand. In order to address the short-term and long-term issues related to housing, a coordinated, regional housing strategy will be necessary to address longstanding problems and promote a robust housing market for years to come.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks proposals to assist in the development of a Regional Housing Strategy for the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC), a non-profit regional economic and community development organization serving Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset Counties. The plan will complement SAP&DC's 2020-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the recently completed Recovery and Resilience Plan completed by Points Consulting (2021). The Housing Strategy will examine current housing conditions and trends throughout the Region, list potential redevelopment opportunities, and identify housing priorities. The Strategy will also present a recommendation for how SAP&DC can best implement these findings, including targeted outcomes, obtaining the necessary capacity to effectively execute the recommendations, building relationships with local stakeholders, and assess current housing programs and funding opportunities.

To effectively implement the findings and recommendations of the Regional Housing Strategy, the selected consultant will describe the stakeholders, organizations, and programs that will assist with implementation activities. The Strategy will specify potential stakeholders in the region's real estate community, realtors, business owners, developers, local governments, and other organizations that can help SAP&DC's housing efforts. It will identify policies, regulations, and approaches that could be pursued on the municipal, regional, and state levels to address regional housing needs. The selected consultant will also help provide a list of specific properties/neighborhoods to prioritize for housing redevelopment projects. When complete, this Strategy will provide a framework for addressing housing issues in the Region and advise SAP&DC on how to effectively facilitate housing redevelopment efforts.

Who May Respond

Any consultant or other organization with appropriate expertise may respond. Ideally, the consultant will have expertise in housing research, economic and community development, and related fields. Parties submitting proposals in response to this RFP are referred to herein individually as “Applicant” or collectively as “Applicants”.

Summary of Work

As previously mentioned, the Regional Housing Strategy will examine several important topics and provide guidance related to the following:

Provide an overview of the regional housing market, including:

- Relevant housing statistics on current housing conditions
- Conduct housing market research
- Complete GIS analysis of income, employment, home ownership, vacancy rates, and other housing related topics.
- Facilitate discussions with stakeholders, realtors, developers, business owners, and others to analyze current housing problems and potential solutions.
- Conduct scenario modeling, projecting the long-term impact on counties, cities, and neighborhoods if no action is taken to improve the housing situation.

Demand for housing in Region:

- Garner information on market demand and preferences of homeowners and renters.
- Survey data on current households and preference for living in another place (different location, downtown, higher/lower rent, etc.)
- Role of social capital in housing preferences (“third spaces”, quality of place, community well-being).

Create prioritized list of properties/neighborhoods to focus on the following:

- Identify tipping point neighborhoods (see Recovery and Resilience Plan for further details).
- Focus to households that might be considered a target market for new, market-rate downtown housing.
- Identify potential target markets/households to prioritize, including location and demographic/household characteristics.
- Identify areas ripe for residential development, including candidates for reuse, nearby amenities, major employers nearby.
- Analyze downtown areas in the Region, identifying the physical structures and properties that hold potential for residential development and how investments can be made to promote market-rate housing.

Create a Strategic Action Plan which addresses the following:

- Identify and obtain housing funding sources to assist local governments and landowners for housing redevelopment/renovation projects.
- Address the lack of “willingness to pay” for high home prices/ high rental rates.
- Plan for addressing gaps in equity and rent required for residential development.
- Targeted outcomes and methods for measuring progress.
- Identify stakeholders and partners to help ensure successful completion of efforts.
- Provide a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term success of the Strategy.
- Establish an operational plan which develops strategic goals, objectives, milestones, timelines, and desired outcomes which will ensure success.

Supplemental Materials

The following sections contain important materials that will enhance the applicant’s understanding of SAP&DC’s previous work. It includes brief summaries of previous research efforts, such as the 2020-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021). It is strongly encouraged that the applicant read these materials in their entirety to have a more complete understanding of SAP&DC’s previous efforts as well as how the Regional Housing Strategy will build upon these documents.

Goals and Objectives

The 2020-2024 CEDS describes SAP&DC’s overall economic development strategy. The CEDS created a formal list of goals and objectives for SAP&DC to achieve. Below is an outline of the goals and objectives mentioned in the CEDS (see 2020-2024 CEDS Report for full list).

GOAL 1: SEEK EXPANSION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY THROUGH DIVERSIFIED JOB GROWTH

- OBJECTIVE A: Continue the gradual movement of the Region to a more technology-related, diversified economy.
- OBJECTIVE B: Create an entrepreneurial environment to support start-up enterprises and strengthen existing businesses.
- OBJECTIVE C: Support workforce development initiatives that build the talent pipeline and enhance the skills of the incumbent workforce to ensure the Region’s employers remain competitive.
- OBJECTIVE D: Expand the tourism visitation potential for the Region.
- OBJECTIVE E: Provide services and amenities intended to attract the retired (or near retired) households.
- OBJECTIVE F: Support the growth of local agriculture-related businesses.

GOAL 2: MAINTAIN AND MODERNIZE INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAKE THE REGION MORE COMPETITIVE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- OBJECTIVE A: Improve the transportation network to tie the Region together and make the Region more accessible to other markets.
- OBJECTIVE B: Upgrade water/sewer infrastructure to accommodate new and modern growth.

GOAL 3: ADAPT COMMUNITIES TO BE MORE ATTRACTIVE AS PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK.

- OBJECTIVE A: Market the Region as an exciting, outdoor playground.
- OBJECTIVE B: Support innovative entrepreneurial initiatives that are designed to attract businesses, industries, and professionals to downtown areas.
- OBJECTIVE C: Retain and recruit younger people to stay in and/or migrate to the Region.
- OBJECTIVE D: Invest in communities and work to promote and enhance their assets.
- OBJECTIVE E: Build local leadership capacity.

GOAL 4: UPGRADE AND EXPAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE IN THE REGION.

- OBJECTIVE A: Complete an infrastructure assessment in the Region to determine the best strategies to increase access and availability of broadband and cellular services to residents and businesses.
- OBJECTIVE B: Promote the deployment of high-speed broadband and cellular services throughout the Region.
- OBJECTIVE C: Develop and maintain a cutting-edge telecommunications infrastructure by supporting pilot initiatives to bring coverage to the unserved and underserved areas of the Region

GOAL 5: INVEST IN AREAS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH AND WELL BEING WHILE RAISING AWARENESS OF HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS.

- OBJECTIVE A: Expand rural health services throughout the Region.
- OBJECTIVE B: Collaborate with employers to address employee health needs.
- OBJECTIVE C: Develop Community Plans to address substance abuse issues.

Recovery and Resilience Plan

The Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021), completed by Points Consulting researched the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Southern Alleghenies region. The Plan also proposed strategies and priority items for SAP&DC to address to promote long-term economic prosperity and resilience in the future. The Plan outlines four Strategic Planning Priorities, including Housing and Blight Reduction Strategy, Workforce Retention and Attraction Strategy, Quality of Place Strategy, and Worker Attraction Guidance.

Related to housing, the Plan identified and provided details on key problems facing the Region, including a lack guidance related to which housing is permissible in certain localities, a lack of new single-family homes, the prevalence of blight, and rising home prices. There are several targeted outcomes outlined in the Plan to address these issues. Among the objectives includes

increasing local and regional capacity through the creation of a scalable housing initiative to effectively administer current blight elimination regulations and created at the state level. SAP&DC can priorities increasing urban dwelling for those between the ages of 18-35 and 65+, which will link vital services and jobs to housing.

The Recovery and Resilience Plan also provides several focused strategies which will enable the Commission to accomplish these goals. It encourages SAP&DC to reach a consensus on housing objectives and consider a Complete Neighborhoods Task Force determine geographic focus areas, assess current housing programs, and identify desired outcomes. Stakeholder convening is encouraged, and it is recommended that SAP&DC host discussions with developers/builders to discuss their interest in partnering with SAP&DC and redevelopment authorities to community development efforts. The plan also recommended the consideration of establishing a regional housing community development corporation (CDC), which coordinates local housing market efforts and engages with private sector partners to provide attractive investment opportunities.

Alleghenies Ahead Summary

Alleghenies Ahead was a collaborative plan put together by Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC) in coordination with the six rural counties it serves to implement strategies that will boost the region's economy, attract new residents, and guide the growth of strong communities throughout the region. It is guided by the principle of "plan regionally and implement locally," and gives sustained attention to issues such as housing, recreation, and technology to improve the region. The plan also offered policy recommendations for each individual county on how to attract businesses and families. In addition to data analysis, the plan also included information gathered from sit-down conversations with 400 residents and over 1,100 completed online surveys.

Alleghenies Ahead identified several unique assets and advantages that could be utilized to draw migrants to the region. These assets should be considered when engaging in community and economic development efforts. These advantages were:

- Natural Amenities
- Quality public schools
- Rich agriculture
- Historic cities and broughs
- Located close to major cities of Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington,

Alleghenies Ahead dedicated considerable time to describing two important trends that emerged regarding current issues for the region. First, the region faces a demographic disadvantage in which a rapidly aging population and lack of in-migration of younger workers to the Southern Alleghenies Region has impacted its' labor market and housing market. This harmful trend is reflected in the shrinking cohort of young people throughout all six counties since the 1970s. In addition, the region experienced a net out-migration of over 10,000 residents between 2010 and

2016. The second trend impacting the region is the varying implementation capacity of local jurisdictions in that, although there are many local jurisdictions, they have little capacity to attract households and businesses to their area. To address this, the plan identified five market types to describe the status of each county, so they can effectively pinpoint their needs and invest in themselves.

The plan found there were several negative trends related to the region’s workforce. Since the post-war period, there has been a severe lack of high-wage jobs attainable for those without a college degree. There has also been a growing shortage of workers given the aging population of the region and the large number of residents out-migrating. The plan found that the share of the labor force over the age of 55 is now at a record high of 30% while it was only 10% in 2000. As a result, employers have struggled finding workers to fill jobs opening.

Alleghenies Ahead classified eight crucial issues that have greatly impacted the ability for communities to attract younger people and businesses:

- 1) Broadband and cellular service,
- 2) Collaboration and coordination,
- 3) Business and workforce development,
- 4) Housing and blight,
- 5) Recreational amenities and natural assets,
- 6) Agriculture,
- 7) Public health and safety,
- 8) Transportation.

With these eight difficulties listed, Alleghenies Ahead distinguishes which of these issues are most pressing for each individual county, and which are problems faced by the entire region.

Regional Priorities	Broadband and cellular service, Collaboration and coordination, and Business and workforce development
Bedford County	Recreational Amenities, Public Health and Safety
Blair	Agriculture, Housing and Blight, Public Health and Safety
Cambria	Recreational Amenities, Housing and Blight, Transportation
Fulton	Recreational Amenities, Agriculture,
Huntingdon	Recreational Amenities, Housing and Blight
Somerset	Recreational Amenities, Housing and Blight

Informed by extensive dialogue with residents, the plan listed four values and principles that were important to people throughout the region and should be considered when pursuing economic development initiatives.

Values:

- We value our families, our strong social connections, and our neighbors
- We value independence and self-reliance
- We value our natural resources and connections to the land
- We value our heritage and the sense of identity it provides

Principles:

- We value our families, our strong social connections, and our neighbors
- We value independence and self-reliance
- We value our natural resources and connections to the land
- We value our heritage and the sense of identity it provides

Description of Entities

SAP&DC: The Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAP&DC) is a non-profit regional economic and community development organization, serving the six South-Central Pennsylvania counties of Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset. SAP&DC is governed by a 19-member volunteer Board of Directors comprised of County Commissioners from each member county and representatives from the private sector. The Commission is exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). SAP&DC's mission is "to address human resource development, encourage the creation and retention of jobs, and to improve the quality of life for residents of the Alleghenies." It is located at 3 Sheraton Drive, Altoona, PA 16601.

The CARES Act: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal economic relief package passed to protect the American people from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The \$2.2 trillion bill will be allocated through direct cash payments, unemployment benefits, small business loans, and federal aid to state and local governments. The CARES Act also provided the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with \$1.5 billion for economic development assistance programs to help communities address issues related to the Coronavirus.

EDA: The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is a federal bureau under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The EDA has been tasked with implementing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act) which includes \$1.5 billion for "economic development assistance programs to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus."

DRC: The Disaster Recovery Coordinator is responsible for developing and implementing SAP&DC's Regional Housing Strategy. The DRC will focus primarily on developing and enhancing broadband infrastructure to target unserved and underserved areas across the region. The expansion of broadband will ensure residents and businesses have reliable, high-speed internet access for remote learning, teleworking, telemedical, and business development activities. The contact information for the DRC is below:

Dustin Bishop
Disaster Recovery Coordinator
SAP&DC
Email: dbishop@sapdc.org
Phone Number: 814-949-6511

Response Information & Estimated Project Timeline

1. **Closing Submission Date:** Responses must be submitted no later than **4:00 PM on June 17, 2021**. It is the responsibility of all Applicants to ensure that SAP&DC receives the proposal by the date and time specified above. Late proposals will not be considered.
2. **Submission Instructions:** Proposals should not exceed ten (10) pages in length and should be typed on 8.5 X 11-inch pages with margins no smaller than one (1) inch. Font size should be no smaller than ten (10) point. Supporting materials can be provided in addition to the scope of work. Proposals should be submitted in pdf format via email to Dustin Bishop at dbishop@sapdc.org.
3. **Submissions Assistance:** Questions regarding the RFP will also be addressed to the Disaster Recovery Coordinator mentioned above.
4. **Selection Date:** The responses will be referred to the Southern Alleghenies Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee for review and scoring. The Committee's decision will serve as a recommendation of a firm to the SAP&DC Board of Directors, who will select a firm or team of firms on **June 24, 2022**.
5. **Anticipated Project Start Date:** SAP&DC anticipates entering a fully executed contract with the selected firm or team of firms by **July 11, 2022**.
6. **Completion of work:** SAP&DC expects the work to be completed and all deliverables received by **December 31, 2022**.

Conditions of Response

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the Applicant submitting the proposal and shall not be reimbursed by SAP&DC.

Right to Reject

SAP&DC reserves the right to reject any and all responses received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP.

Small and/or Minority-Owned Businesses

Efforts will be made by SAP&DC to utilize small businesses and minority-owned businesses. An applicant qualifies as a small business firm if it meets the definition of “small business” as established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201), by having average annual receipts for the last three fiscal years of less than six million dollars.

Notice of Decision

It is expected that a decision selecting the successful Applicant will be made no later than June 24, 2022. Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful Applicant, all other Applicants submitting proposals in response to this RFP will be informed, in writing, of the name of the successful Applicant.

Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance for the project is July 11, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

Contract Information

1. **Type of Contract:** Fixed price.
2. **Period of Performance:** The period of performance for this program will be from July 11, 2022, through December 31, 2022.
3. **Payment:** Payment will be made when SAP&DC has determined that milestones have been completed in the approved scope of work. These milestones and the payment schedule will be negotiated with the selected firm prior to the start of work on the project.
4. **Options:** At the discretion of SAP&DC, this contract can be terminated at any time or extended beyond the specified contract period.
5. **Confidentiality:** The Subcontractor agrees to keep the information related to all contracts in confidence.

II. Response Guidelines

Response Outline

1. **Understanding of Work to be Performed:** Each Applicant should demonstrate its understanding of why the project is needed, including past planning efforts related to housing undertaken in the region, such as the I-68 Regional Housing Alliance (czb), the Recovery and Resilience Plan (SAP&DC), Elevate Johnstown (czb), Ahead of the Curve: Altoona Housing Strategy and Downtown Investment Plan (Fourth Economy), and how it will meet SAP&DC's needs. Applicants should not repeat the Statement of Work, but rather describe how the Applicant will accomplish the tasks defined in the work program within the specified time limits.
2. **Service Delivery Process:** Each proposal must describe how the Applicant proposes to complete all tasks identified in the Statement of Work of this RFP. The Applicant must also include a timeline that demonstrates the completion of each task within the limits of the specified period of performance. The timeline should include project milestones that details the completion date of each task outlined in the Statement of Work.
3. **Organizational Experience/Past Performance:** Each Applicant should describe its organization, size (in relation to the proposed services to be performed), and structure. Indicate if appropriate if the Applicant is a small, minority-owned, or disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE). DBEs are certified by the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program (PA UCP) in accordance with 49 CFR Part 26. The following information must be obtained from Applicants who maintain DBE status:
 - a. Firm name;
 - b. Firm address;
 - c. Firm's status as a DBE or non-DBE;
 - d. Age of firm; and
 - e. Annual gross receipts of the firm. Specifically indicate which gross receipts bracket your firm falls under:
 - i. Less than \$500,000
 - ii. \$500,000-\$1 million
 - iii. \$1-\$2 million
 - iv. \$2- \$5 million
 - v. Greater than \$5 million

The Applicant should also describe its prior experience that qualifies the Applicant to fulfill the tasks described in this RFP based on past performance of the same or similar programs. Include all prior experience with similar programs and the operation of programs financed by the Federal/State Government.

4. **Staff Qualifications:** To achieve the objectives outlined in the proposed scope of work, SAP&DC is seeking a qualified and innovative firm or collaborative team of firms with a demonstrated ability to perform the necessary technical assistance. The selected Applicant must possess demonstrated experience in housing research and planning, implementation efforts, economic and community development, and other related topics.

Each Applicant shall identify all personnel that will be assigned to the project, including contact information. Each Applicant shall also describe the relevant qualifications of staff to perform the proposed service, including technical, educational, and experiential background. This section of the proposal should include descriptions of staff team makeup, overall supervision to be exercised, and prior experience of the individual staff team members.

- Statements of qualifications and resumes for project team members with specific mention of related projects including their role, specific knowledge, and experience.
- A list of at least three references and contacts from past or current client relationships involving similar projects.
- Descriptions of example projects that have resulted from the participation of an implementable planning process.
- An organization chart of the project team including identification of project manager, principal in charge, and known sub-consultant/contractor relationships.

5. **Project Budget & Cost Proposal:** All Applicants must submit their total project cost, along with a task-by-task cost breakdown for each of the major tasks defined within the Statement of Work of this RFP. Submitted proposals must reflect a total project cost **not to exceed \$100,000.**

Regional Housing Strategy Schedule

Task	Date
RFP advertised	June 3, 2022
Deadline for interested firms to submit proposals	June 17, 2022
Consultant(s) selected	June 24, 2022
Anticipated contract start date	July 11, 2022
Regional Housing Strategy complete	December 31, 2022

III. RESPONSE EVALUATION

Proposal Contents

All responses must follow the specified format and include all required elements listed in Section II of this RFP.

Ineligible Responses

Proposals may be judged ineligible and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

1. The response is not received timely in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
2. The response does not follow the specified format.
3. The response is not adequate for the reviewers to form a judgment that the proposed undertaking would comply with federal and state requirements.
4. The amount of the proposal exceeds the amount of funding available for the project.

Evaluation

Evaluation of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Value
• Demonstrated knowledge in housing research and planning, implementation efforts, economic and community development, and other related topics.	30
• Demonstrated ability of the designated project director and key personnel to carry out the work as outlined.	10
• Cost relative to the proposed scope of work.	10
• Demonstrated ability to complete the scope of work within the period of performance.	25
• Adequacy of the proposed scope of work to meet the needs of the regional housing effort.	25
TOTAL	/100