

Climate Action Planning Process Overview

This attachment provides an overview of the three major components of a climate action planning process: a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, a climate vulnerability assessment, and the development of a climate action plan.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory

A recent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory is key for municipal climate planning because it provides data that officials can use to prioritize actions, set goals and targets, and—most importantly—measure future progress. Emissions inventories also allow towns to compare their current emissions with towns and cities of varying sizes throughout the world.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment

Climate vulnerability assessments identify hazards that result from climate change (such as sea level rise, droughts, higher temperatures, more frequent and extreme storms, etc.) and the potential impacts caused by those hazards. Climate hazard impacts are those that might be experienced by municipal infrastructure, local economies, or communities. By understanding climate hazards and potential impacts, towns can then identify strategies to build infrastructure and community resilience as part of a climate action planning process.

Climate Action Plan Development

A climate action plan (CAP) is a strategy document that outlines a collection of measures and policies that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Using the emissions inventory and the vulnerability assessment as the foundation, a CAP defines GHG reduction goals based on local priorities for reducing emissions and provides the guiding framework for achieving those goals. A CAP can be a standalone document, or it can be integrated into an existing plan, such as a comprehensive plan. Effective plans are transparent, equitable and developed with stakeholder input and support.

A CAP provides local governments with a framework that facilitates coordination across local government departments and community stakeholders when implementing initiatives from the plan. It helps to prioritize actions that should be taken to successfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions and serves as the roadmap for local governments as they implement municipal and community-wide programs, projects, and policies.

To maximize success in implementing the plan, it is important to engage local government staff, elected officials, residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders. Engaging the public ensures that the goals and initiatives identified in the plan are desirable and practical for those individuals and entities involved with implementing them.