

# Climate Smart Communities Certification Program



*Certification Manual*

## PLEDGE ELEMENT 2: SET GOALS, INVENTORY EMISSIONS, PLAN FOR CLIMATE ACTION

*Gather data about local GHG emission sources. Develop baseline emissions inventories for government operations and the community. Establish quantifiable GHG emissions reduction target(s). Propose an emission reduction schedule and financing strategy. Develop a local action plan for reducing emissions.*

Action #	Action Name	Action Pathway Phase	Possible Points	Priority
<b>Pledge Element 2: Set goals, inventory emissions, plan for climate action</b>			<b>40</b>	
<b>Establish a Baseline</b>			<b>16</b>	
<a href="#">2.1</a>	Develop a government operations GHG emissions inventory	Assess, Plan, Govern	8	√
<a href="#">2.2</a>	Develop a community GHG emissions inventory	Assess, Plan, Govern	8	√
<b>Set Goals</b>			<b>8</b>	
<a href="#">2.3</a>	Establish a government operations emissions reduction target	Assess, Plan, Govern	4	√
<a href="#">2.4</a>	Establish a community emissions reduction target	Assess, Plan, Govern	4	√
<b>Develop a Plan</b>			<b>16</b>	
<a href="#">2.5</a>	Develop a government operations climate action plan	Assess, Plan, Govern	8	√
<a href="#">2.6</a>	Develop a community climate action plan	Assess, Plan, Govern	8	√

*Please note: The recertification requirements for each action are subject to change in future versions of the CSC Certification Manual.*

## *Establish a Baseline*

### 2.1 DEVELOP A GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS GHG EMISSIONS INVENTORY

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 5 years prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 8

**Priority action**

#### **A. Why is this action important?**

One of the first steps in the climate action process is establishing a baseline from which to set goals and measure progress. The baseline GHG inventory provides the local government the data needed to prioritize actions that will offer the best return on investment, whether through cost, energy consumption, or GHG emissions savings. Local governments should develop a GHG emissions inventory for their government operations by selecting an appropriate baseline year, gathering the data, and developing an inventory report. This analysis creates the platform to adopt realistic GHG, energy use, and cost saving goals and prioritize actions in a climate action plan (or similar plan). The results of the inventory should be publicly released.

#### **B. How to implement this action**

Conduct a GHG emissions inventory of government operations for all applicable sources of Scope 1 (direct) and Scope 2 (indirect) emissions. Reporting Scope 3 emissions is optional, though highly encouraged. However, some voluntary reporting programs require reporting of emissions from specified Scope 3 emissions sources. Local governments should use the Local Government Operations Protocol (LGOP) to complete this action. Developing a GHG inventory is a data-intensive and time-consuming task. Engaging an intern or assigning specific hours of existing staff to support this task will contribute to timely completion of the inventory. There are a number of resources available to assist with developing a GHG emissions inventory. A summary of the steps is found below:

- Determine GHG inventory boundaries- what does the local government have operational control over?
- Confirm baseline year, the LGOP will suggest a calendar year
- Identify emissions sources (e.g. buildings, vehicles, streetlights, waste)
- Request data for the baseline year, providing data collection templates can save time and prevent confusion
- Once received, thoroughly review all data for completeness and accuracy, make sure all data are provided for all facilities and departments, and for the correct timeframe
- Input information into a GHG inventory tool or spreadsheet with emissions coefficients to quantify GHG emissions
- Perform a quality review of all equations, referred to as a quality assurance/quality control review (QA/QC)
- Finalize data
- Report results

### **C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs**

Conducting a GHG emissions inventory of government operations can take from a few months to over a year depending on the complexity of the local government structure, data availability and quality, and staff capacity. Project costs are staff and consultant time, if applicable. The time required will be reduced significantly as data collection procedures improve and staff becomes familiar with the process.

### **D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?**

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

### **E. How to obtain points for this action**

Conduct a GHG inventory of government operations that follows the Local Government Operations Protocol and includes all Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions sources relevant to that local government.

### **F. What to submit**

Each CSC must submit a copy of its most recent local government operations GHG inventory report. These can be standalone documents or included in inventory reports that also cover community emissions. The inventory must have been completed within five years prior to the application date.

### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- CSC How to: Local GHG Inventories: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/57176.html>
- Local Government Operations Protocol: <http://www.theclimateregistry.org/resources/protocols/local-government-operations-protocol/>
- CSC Local Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Tool: <http://www.midhudsoncsc.org/resources.html>
- ICLEI-Local Government for Sustainability USA guidance documents on conducting a GHG emissions inventory for local government operations: [http://www.icleiusa.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/climate\\_mitigation\\_guidance/steps-to-complete-a-local-government-operations-inventory](http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/climate_mitigation_guidance/steps-to-complete-a-local-government-operations-inventory)
- The Climate Registry: <http://www.theclimateregistry.org/>

### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## 2.2 DEVELOP A COMMUNITY GHG EMISSIONS INVENTORY

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 5 years prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 8

**Priority action**

### A. Why is this action important?

The first steps in the climate action process are to understand the sources of emissions and establish a baseline against which to set goals and measure progress. Typically, the local government operations are a small portion of the overall community GHG emissions. It is therefore important to understand how all of the industry, businesses and individual homes and vehicles are contributing to climate change. Once that is determined, the local government can focus policy action and incentive programs on those sectors that have the most opportunity to reduce GHG emissions.

In 2011-2013, regional inventories were conducted through the Climate Smart Communities and Cleaner Greener Communities programs throughout New York State for the baseline year of 2010. Inventories were developed at the regional level, and then allocated to the county, town, city, and villages within the region. Each regional inventory was developed using the New York GHG Protocol, which was developed by the NYGHG Working Group to establish a consistent protocol for use throughout the state.

### B. How to implement this action

Each local government should develop a GHG inventory for the community as a whole by selecting an appropriate baseline year, gathering the data, and developing an inventory report. This analysis will help the local government prioritize actions. Scope 1 and 2 emissions should be assessed and reported, although Scope 3 emissions are optional. The report should be publicly released. Local governments can follow the U.S. Community Protocol, for guidance on how to conduct a community inventory and what to include.

A summary of the key steps in developing a community GHG inventory are as follows:

- Determine GHG inventory boundaries- what does the local government have operational control over?
- Confirm baseline year, using the calendar year of the local government operations inventory is a good idea
- Identify emissions sources (e.g. buildings, transportation, waste)
- Request data for the baseline year, providing data collection templates can save time and prevent confusion
- Once received, thoroughly review all data for completeness and accuracy- if your community has limited industrial facilities, but there appears to be an incredibly high percentage of energy use from that sector, there might be errors in the data
- Input information into GHG Inventory tool or spreadsheet with emissions coefficients to quantify GHG emissions

- Perform a quality review of all equations, referred to as a quality assurance/quality control review (QA/QC)
- Finalize data
- Report results

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Conducting a GHG emissions inventory of the community as whole can take anywhere between a couple months to over a year depending data availability and quality and staff capacity. Project costs will include staff time, but could also include time for an intern or consultant to assist, as well as potential cost for a GHG inventory tool.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning, with assistance from the CSC task force. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Complete a community-wide GHG inventory that follows the [U.S. Community Protocol](#). Local governments may earn points for this action by submitting the relevant Climate Smart Communities or Cleaner, Greener Communities allocated regional inventory, noting the inventory results for their specific jurisdiction (as long as the inventory was developed within the eligibility timeline for this action).

### F. What to submit

Each CSC must submit a copy of its most recent community GHG inventory report. This can be a standalone document or included in an inventory report that also covers government operations emissions. The inventory must have been completed within five years prior to the application date.

### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- Climate Smart Communities, Local GHG Inventories:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/57176.html>
- ICLEI- Local Government for Sustainability USA guidance documents on conducting a GHG emissions inventory:  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/tools/ghg-protocol/community-protocol/us-community-protocol-for-accounting-and-reporting-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions>
- U.S. Community Protocol for Accounting and Reporting of GHG Emissions:  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/tools/ghg-protocol/community-protocol>
- Climate Smart Communities and Cleaner Greener Communities Regional Inventories:
  - Mid-Hudson Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (2012):  
[http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/midhudghginventory.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/midhudghginventory.pdf)
  - Capital District 2010 Regional Inventory,(2013):  
[http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/capdistghginven.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/capdistghginven.pdf)

- Central New York Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (2012): [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/cnymethod.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/cnymethod.pdf)
- Long Island 2010 Regional Inventory: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/liregghginven.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/liregghginven.pdf)
- Finger Lakes CGC Plan Report: <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Statewide-Initiatives/Cleaner-Greener-Communities/Regional-Sustainability-Plans/Finger-Lakes.aspx>
- Mohawk Valley CGC Plan Report: <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Statewide-Initiatives/Cleaner-Greener-Communities/Regional-Sustainability-Plans/Mohawk-Valley.aspx>
- North Country CGC Plan Report: <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Statewide-Initiatives/Cleaner-Greener-Communities/Regional-Sustainability-Plans/North-Country.aspx>
- Southern Tier CGC Plan Report: <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Statewide-Initiatives/Cleaner-Greener-Communities/Regional-Sustainability-Plans/Southern-Tier.aspx>
- Western New York CGC Plan Report: <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Statewide-Initiatives/Cleaner-Greener-Communities/Regional-Sustainability-Plans/Western-New-York.aspx>

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## Set Goals

### 2.3 ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Any time prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 4

**Priority action**

#### A. Why is this action important?

To help drive action and measure progress, local governments ought to establish GHG emission reduction targets for their government operations. Many local governments choose to establish short- and long-term targets, to set more immediate and far-reaching goals. The short-term targets help to ensure that action is taken in the near term, whereas long-term targets, such as New York State’s target of reducing emissions 80 percent below 1990 baseline levels by 2050, can set the stage for major planning initiatives and investments designed to dramatically reduce energy use and emissions. Local governments are encouraged to establish targets similar to neighboring communities, the region, and the state. Adopting GHG reduction targets shows the degree of progress the local government makes over time and allows the local government to adjust its course of action if goals are surpassed or not fulfilled.

## **B. How to implement this action**

Research and adopt short-, medium-, and long-term GHG reduction targets in a resolution or in a climate action plan or comparable plan such as a comprehensive plan.

A baseline emissions inventory is needed to establish an emissions reduction target, so the community has a means of measuring progress against the baseline. A GHG emissions forecast, often included in a baseline emissions inventory report, is also useful for anticipating changes in GHG emissions from population change, technology changes, or economic impacts on emissions.

## **C. Time frame, project costs, and resource need**

Establishing a GHG emissions reduction target(s) often takes place during the creation of a climate action plan. The goals and strategies in a climate action plan inform one another. Project costs involve primarily staff time, and resources needed are data from the GHG emissions inventory and software such as Microsoft Excel to develop a model to project GHG emissions.

## **D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?**

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

## **E. How to obtain points for this action**

Local governments must establish a GHG emissions reduction target for government operations; however, it is in the local government's best interest to establish short-, medium-, and long-term reduction goals.

## **F. What to submit**

Local governments must submit copies of formal documentation, such as a council resolution, report, formally adopted plan or memorandum stating the established emissions reduction target(s) for government operations. The targets can be established at any time prior to the application date, as long as they are currently valid.

## **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA's guidance on creating GHG emissions reduction targets:  
[http://www.icleiusa.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/climate\\_mitigation\\_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-two](http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/climate_mitigation_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-two)
- ICLEI's Climate and Air Pollution Planning Assistant:  
<http://www.icleiusa.org/tools/cappa/climate-and-air-pollution-planning-assistant-cappa>
- New York State GHG Reduction Target and Climate Action Plan Interim Report:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/80930.html>

## **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## 2.4 ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Any time prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 4

**Priority action**

### A. Why is this action important?

To help drive action and measure progress, local governments ought to establish GHG emissions reduction targets for the community as a whole. Many local governments choose to establish short-term targets and long-term targets, to set both immediate and far reaching goals. The short-term targets help to ensure that action is taken in the near-term, whereas long-term targets, such as reducing emissions 80 percent below baseline levels by 2050, can set the stage for major planning initiatives and investments designed to dramatically reduce energy use and emissions. Local governments are encouraged to establish targets similar to neighboring communities, the region, and the state.

### B. How to implement this action

Research and adopt short-, medium-, and long-term GHG reduction targets in a resolution, climate action plan, or comparable plan such as a comprehensive plan. If a target has already been established for the region, local governments should demonstrate how they have agreed to either meet or exceed this target.

A baseline emissions inventory is needed to establish an emissions reduction target, so the community has a means of measuring progress against the baseline. A GHG emissions forecast, often included in a baseline emissions inventory report, is also useful for anticipating changes in GHG emissions from population change, technology changes, or economic impacts on emissions.

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Establishing a GHG emissions reduction target(s) often takes place during the creation of a climate action plan. The goals and strategies in a climate action plan inform one another. Project costs involve primarily staff time, and resources needed are data from the GHG emissions inventory and software such as Microsoft Excel to project GHG emissions.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments must establish a GHG emissions reduction target for the community as a whole; however, it is in the local government's best interest to establish short-, medium-, and long-term reduction goals.

#### F. What to submit

Local governments should submit a copy of any formal documentation, such as a council resolution, report, adopted plan or memorandum stating the established emissions reduction target(s) for the community. The targets can be established at any time prior to the application date, as long as they are currently valid.

#### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- Climate Smart Communities, Develop a Local Climate Action Plan: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/67101.html>
- ICLEI Pathways: [http://www.icleiusa.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/climate\\_mitigation\\_guidance](http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/climate_mitigation_guidance)
- New York State Climate Action Planning: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/80930.html>  
[Autodesk, Inc., C-FACT for Cities: http://www.autodesk.com/sustainable-design/sustainability-solutions/cfact-cities](http://www.autodesk.com/sustainable-design/sustainability-solutions/cfact-cities)

#### H. Recertification requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.

## *Plan for Climate Action*

### 2.5 DEVELOP A GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 5 years prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 8

**Priority action**

#### A. Why is this action important?

Local governments should develop a plan for reducing emissions from their own operations to prioritize actions and gather support for short- and long-term investments, policies, projects, and programs aimed at conserving energy and reducing GHG emissions. The plan should outline the policies, programs, and projects needed to achieve the government's emissions reduction target(s). Local governments are encouraged to develop government operations plans, so they can lead by example when seeking to implement community-wide measures.

Local governments are encouraged to incorporate climate adaptation planning into their climate action plan. However, for the purpose of this certification program, climate adaptation planning is addressed in [Action 7.4, Develop Climate Adaptation Strategies](#).

#### B. How to implement this action

Develop a plan that includes the results of the GHG emissions inventory for local government operations, the GHG emissions reduction targets for local government operations, and how the combined GHG reductions from plans, policies, and actions will allow the local government to achieve the GHG reduction targets.

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Crafting a climate action plan for government operations will take roughly six to 12 months based on staff capacity, availability of data and information, and level of public engagement. Project costs include staff time and possibly consultants to support the development of the plan, along with printing charges if the local government elects to publish hard copies of the plan.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments can earn points for this action by taking the following steps:

	<u>Possible Points</u>
• Perform public outreach and public review of draft plan	4
• Develop and publicly release a government operations climate action plan	4

### F. What to submit

A government operations climate action plan can be a standalone document, part of a community climate action plan, a sustainability plan, or another existing plan such as a strategic plan. Local governments should submit a publicly released plan that outlines the steps that the government will take to reduce emissions, along with documentation, either in the plan or separately, that demonstrates that the local government performed public outreach and/or made the draft plan publicly available for comment. The contents of the plan must be substantially consistent with guidance provided by the CSC program (see link below) and must have been released within five years prior to the application date.

### G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- Climate Smart Communities, Develop a Local Climate Action Plan: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/67493.html>
- ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA's guidance on crafting a climate action plan: [http://www.icleiusa.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/climate\\_mitigation\\_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-three](http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/climate_mitigation_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-three)
- California Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative climate action plan template: [http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/SEEC\\_Climate%20Action\\_Planning\\_Templates.zip/view](http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/SEEC_Climate%20Action_Planning_Templates.zip/view)

### H. Recertification requirements

Local governments must submit a climate action plan that was developed or updated within ten years prior to the application date.

## 2.6 DEVELOP A COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, Plan, Govern

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 5 years prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 8

**Priority action**

### A. Why is this action important?

To gather support from the community and key stakeholders, local governments should develop a community-wide climate action plan for reducing emissions. This plan should outline the policies, programs, and projects needed to achieve the community's emissions reduction target(s). A successful climate action plan provides implementation plans on specific strategies aimed at reducing emissions and was developed following a comprehensive process involving engagement from a wide range of stakeholders.

Local governments are encouraged to incorporate climate adaptation planning into their climate action plan. However, for the purpose of this certification program, climate adaptation planning is addressed in [Action 7.4, Develop Climate Adaptation Strategies](#).

### B. How to implement this action

Develop a plan that includes the results of the GHG emissions inventory for the community as a whole, the GHG emissions reduction targets for the community as a whole, and how the combined GHG reductions from plans, policies, and actions will achieve the GHG reduction goals for the community as a whole. Climate action plans must be coordinated with existing community plans and programs to avoid undermining them. There are specific procedural requirements for incorporating a climate action plan into an existing comprehensive plan. CSCs are encouraged to contact the DOS Office of General Counsel for guidance on such actions (<http://www.dos.ny.gov/cnsl/counsel.htm>).

### C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Crafting a climate action plan for the community as a whole will take roughly six to 12 months based on staff capacity, availability of data and information, and level of public engagement. Project costs include staff time and possibly consultants to support the development of the plan, along with printing charges if the local government elects to publish hard copies of the plan. Larger public outreach events could also result in costs for marketing materials or other event related expenses.

### D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. These activities are typically led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the departments of environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments can earn points for this action by taking the following steps:

Possible Points

- Perform public outreach and public review of draft plan 4
- Develop and publicly release a community climate action plan 4

#### **F. What to submit**

A community climate action plan can be a standalone document, combined with a government operations climate action plan, or incorporated into a sustainability plan, strategic plan, or a comprehensive plan. Local governments should submit a publicly released plan that outlines the steps that the community will take to reduce emissions, along with documentation, either in the plan or separately, that demonstrates that the local government performed public outreach or made the draft plan publicly available for comment. The contents of the plan must be substantially consistent with guidance provided by the CSC program (see link below) and must have been released within five years prior to the application date. Points will not be awarded for maladaptive measures.

#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- Climate Smart Communities, How To Develop a Local Climate Action Plan:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/67493.html>
- ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA's guidance on crafting a climate action plan:  
[http://www.icleiusa.org/climate\\_and\\_energy/climate\\_mitigation\\_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-three](http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/climate_mitigation_guidance/climate-mitigation-milestone-three)
- California Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative climate action plan template:  
[http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/SEEC\\_Climate%20Action\\_Planning\\_Templates.zip/view](http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/SEEC_Climate%20Action_Planning_Templates.zip/view)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

Local governments must submit a climate action plan that was developed or updated within ten years prior to the application date.