

Climate Smart Communities Certification Program



Certification Manual

PLEDGE ELEMENT 9: INFORM AND INSPIRE THE PUBLIC

Lead by example. Host events, organize educational programs, and support websites and social media outlets that publicize local government commitment to reducing energy use; saving tax dollars, reducing, reusing, and recycling materials; and adapting to a changing climate. Encourage citizens to follow suit.

Action #	Action Name	Action Pathway Phase	Possible Points	Priority
Pledge Element 9: Inform and inspire the public			18	
9.1	Create a climate change education, outreach, and engagement program, focusing on mitigation and adaptation	Build Capacity	4	
9.2	Create and support an energy reduction campaign or challenge	Implement	5	
9.3	Host climate related educational seminars, workshops, conferences, or fairs	Implement	3	
9.4	Maintain a website on local climate action efforts	Implement	3	
9.5	Use social media to inform the community about the progress of local government's efforts	Monitor and report	3	

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

9.1 CREATE A CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM, FOCUSING ON MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Action pathway phase: Build capacity

Eligibility timeline: Currently active

Total possible points: 4

A. Why is this action important?

Public education, outreach and engagement are critical to preparing the public for the potential effects of climate change and to enlist the public in taking steps to reduce their GHG emissions. Education, outreach and engagement can be performed by a local government, but can also be effectively accomplished through partnerships with regional entities and local stakeholder groups. Education, outreach and engagement also provide an opportunity to collaborate with nontraditional stakeholder groups, to discuss co-benefits of mitigation and adaptation actions, and to identify new and innovative ways to build community resilience to climate change and reduce GHG emissions.

B. How to implement this action

Local governments can follow the guidelines below to develop and implement a climate change mitigation and adaptation education, outreach, and engagement program.

1. Formally establish a climate-change mitigation and adaptation public outreach, education, and engagement program. Ensure the program has associated goals and objectives and that the program design aims to achieve those objectives. Some local governments may elect to incorporate climate-change education, outreach, and engagement into existing programs or plans, while others may choose to treat it as a separate engagement opportunity.
2. Conduct trainings to educate local government staff on climate change, how to communicate about climate change, and how they can integrate climate into their existing projects or programs.
3. Collaborate with local stakeholder groups to engage with and educate high-risk groups about the impacts of climate change and individual actions residents and businesses can take to prepare. Potential adaptation activities will likely evolve through dialogue with stakeholders, such as those in the agriculture sector, coastal businesses, mobility-restricted populations, and others.
4. Ensure that materials are printed in several languages and accessible for a wide-array of reading levels.
5. Develop a website for communicating information to the public about climate change, and the steps residents and businesses can take to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for the effects of potential extreme weather events as well as gradual changes.
6. Collaborate with existing public health community outreach, education, and engagement efforts, and ensure that climate-change considerations are integrated into their efforts.
7. Coordinate with public health officials and emergency responders and other community stakeholders as appropriate to widely disseminate key information. Potential partners include religious institutions, academia, neighborhood associations, professional societies, schools, the YMCA, and other membership associations.

These guidelines are a starting point, and can be tailored to meet the needs of each community as appropriate.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Implementing a climate-change public engagement program is an ongoing effort that can either be incorporated into existing efforts or managed independently from other engagement programs. The costs to achieve this action can be modest and more can be achieved by collaborating with organizations and leveraging existing efforts. The earlier community engagement occurs, the more likely efforts will succeed and strategies will be well received and achievable.

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

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate 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 department of the environment or planning. Cross-department involvement and support, especially with environmental educators, is recommended.

E. How to obtain points for this action

To obtain points for this action, the local government must have established a climate-change education, outreach, and engagement program and demonstrated that a variety of stakeholders have been contacted and engaged in various community efforts, such as public meetings, targeted stakeholder meetings, educational materials, or through other approaches. For example, early on, it may be useful to conduct focus groups, interviews or surveys to learn more about baseline understanding of the issues and perceptions and beliefs about effects of a changing climate in the community. To receive full credit for this action, local governments must demonstrate that the engagement program has covered both mitigation and adaption.

	<u>Possible Points</u>
• Climate mitigation education, outreach, and engagement activities	2
• Climate adaptation education, outreach, and engagement activities	2

F. What to submit

Local governments should submit documentation illustrating recent (i.e., within one year prior to the application date) outreach or engagement efforts related to climate change adaptation and key community vulnerabilities, such as meeting minutes, summaries of information gathered from the community, copies of webpages, educational materials, presentations or other documentation. Local governments are encouraged to provide additional documentation demonstrating how the program is currently active, such as with any plans for future events or efforts.

G. Links to additional resources or examples

- DEC, Climate Change Information Resources: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/50399.html>
- DEC, Student Information of Climate Change: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/43107.html>
- DOH, Climate, Weather and Health: <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/index.htm>

- DOT, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Initiative: <https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/climate-change>
- NYSERDA, ClimAID Report: <http://nyserda.ny.gov/climaid>
- NOAA, Agriculture: <http://www.climate.gov/#understandingClimate/climateAndYou/agriculture>
- Center for Climate Change Communication: <http://www.climatechangecommunication.org>
- Cornell University Climate Change Resources for NYS: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/climatechange/resources/>

H. Recertification requirements

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

9.2 CREATE AND SUPPORT AN ENERGY REDUCTION CAMPAIGN OR CHALLENGE

Action pathway phase: Implement

Eligibility timeline: Currently active

Total possible points: 5

A. Why is this action important?

Energy reduction campaigns or challenges engage residents and businesses in creative ways to reduce their energy use and associated GHG emissions. Research shows that humans are more likely to participate in a program or activity if they are comparing themselves to someone else or somehow being held accountable for their actions. Energy reduction campaigns like the “10% Challenge” or “Energize NY” encourage residents, for example, to pledge to reduce their energy use by taking small steps like walking to work, turning down the thermostat, or replacing light bulbs with more efficient lights. They then are asked to report on their progress. An energy reduction challenge encourages residents and/or businesses to compete against their peers to see who can reduce to most energy through a variety of actions. A challenge is typically a more structured program with specific actions that participants can implement, with defined reporting requirements.

B. How to implement this action

Local governments should create an energy challenge or campaign that targets the sectors (e.g., residential, commercial) that use the most energy or have the most potential for emissions reductions. Creating an energy campaign or challenge may involve:

1. Engaging or creating an advisory committee comprised of key stakeholders (e.g., commercial property owners ought to serve on an advisory committee for a commercial office energy reduction campaign).
2. Researching existing energy campaigns for the region, state, and country and identifying relevant best practices to use for the local campaign or challenge.
3. Developing the campaign or challenge with input from the community task force or other partners.

4. Determining the best mode of administering the campaign or challenge (e.g., creating a new webpage on the local government website or an entirely new brand and web presence for the campaign or challenge).
5. Creating the campaign or challenge framework, goals, and materials that may include a checklist, an online tool, and guidance for participating in the challenge or campaign.
6. Soliciting participation from the target audience to pilot the challenge or campaign.
7. Organizing an official challenge or campaign launch hosted by the highest elected official.
8. Organizing an educational presentation series for participants, to maintain involvement in the program and share best practices.
9. Ask the highest ranking elected official to launch the challenge or campaign—consider hosting it on a milestone such as Earth Day or the anniversary of the release of the climate action plan.

Alternatively, the local government can actively support or promote to its community an existing energy challenge or campaign of another organization or community. Active promotion would include an official launch and development or dissemination of marketing materials.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

The time frame for creating and piloting the challenge or campaign is based on the scale and scope of the challenge or campaign, and will likely take about one year. Project costs may include staff time, hiring third parties to develop the website and campaign or challenge tool, marketing materials, meeting materials (e.g., space, food, beverage, IT equipment), and awards. Resource needs may include IT equipment and a webpage or website to serve as the home of the challenge or campaign. For supporting another organization’s campaign, the project costs would involve staff time and potentially the development of marketing materials.

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 any local government. The department or office with the responsibility for leading the climate 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.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Points are earned by creating an energy reduction campaign or challenge that was completed within one year prior to the application date or is currently active. The campaign or challenge can be geared toward businesses, residents, institutions, or open to any type of participant within the community.

F. What to submit

Local governments must submit one of or a combination of the following materials to demonstrate that the energy challenge or campaign is either currently active or completed within one year prior to the application date:

- Challenge or campaign website address
- Guidance document

- Marketing materials
- Challenge or campaign progress reports with results

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- ICLEI Green Business Challenge: http://www.icleiusa.org/climate_and_energy/green-business-challenge
- ENERGIZE New York: <http://energizeny.org>
- Albany, NY, Green Business Challenge: <http://www.albansustainability.org/businesses.asp>
- Lowell, MA, Green Restaurant Program: <http://lowellgreenrestaurant.wordpress.com>
- Chicago, IL, Green Office Challenge: <http://chicagogoc.com/>
- Walk/Ride Day, Green Streets Initiative: <http://gogreenstreets.org/>
- Bedford, NY, Energize Bedford: <http://energizebedford.org/>
- ICLEI blog post about Climate Idols, an energy challenge between households in Duluth, MN, and Thunder Bay, Ontario: <http://www.icleiusa.org/blog/archive/2011/04/01/201cclimate-idol-challenge201d-links-duluth-with-sister-city>
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory , Driving Demand for Home Energy Improvements: <http://drivingdemand.lbl.gov>

H. Recertification requirements

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

9.3 HOST CLIMATE RELATED EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES, OR FAIRS

Action pathway phase: Implement

Eligibility timeline: Within 1 year prior to the application date

Total possible points: 3

A. Why is this action important?

Local governments cannot achieve energy and climate goals without the community's participation. The residential and commercial sectors are two large sources of GHG emissions. It is important to educate residents and business owners on energy and water conservation, waste and vehicle miles traveled reductions, and other issues related to climate action. Educating and engaging the public will increase awareness of the benefits of individual action, and will help to further the community's climate action goals.

B. How to implement this action

Local governments may collaborate with groups such as local nonprofits, academic institutions, trade associations, or companies to deliver educational seminars, workshops, conferences, fairs, or components of these events, to engage the public in the local government's energy and climate efforts. Consider which existing (or new) workshops, conferences, fairs, and events the local government may expand to address topics such as the following:

- Energy efficient appliances for residential and commercial buildings
- Onsite renewable energy production
- Weatherization of a residential building
- Creating a recycling and composting system at home or the office
- Safe bike commute in all seasons and bike safety
- Reducing water use in the home and office
- Adapting to increased health risks related to climate change

Local governments should endeavor to reduce waste and energy use to the greatest extent possible for these events and provide recycling at the events.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

This action may be implemented as a single-day event or may take place over the course of a year. Project costs may include staff time, volunteer time, marketing materials, booth and registration fees, honoraria for speakers, and food and beverages for the audience. Information-technology resources may be required to implement this action.

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 any local government. It may be organized by a variety of departments, councils, or committees, such as the CSC task force, planning department, department of public works or recycling division, a sustainability committee, or an environmental committee.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Points can be earned by hosting a single event, or series of events focused on relevant GHG reduction, climate adaptation, or general sustainability themes. Types of events could include seminars, workshops, conferences, summits or fairs. Local governments can receive points for this action if they are the lead organizer or a supporting participant in an event organized by a partner organization. The event must have been held within one year of prior to the application date.

F. What to submit

Local governments must submit documentation (e.g., agenda, website post, educational materials distributed at the event) that includes the topic, date, time, location, subject, and partners of the educational and outreach effort held within the past year.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- New York, NY, Green Festival: <http://www.greenfestivals.org/nyc>
- Regional Leadership Summit 2012: <http://cleanergreenyny.org/>

H. Recertification requirements

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

9.4 MAINTAIN A WEBSITE ON LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION EFFORTS

Action pathway phase: Implement

Eligibility timeline: Currently active

Total possible points: 3

A. Why is this action important?

Using the Internet is a convenient and low-cost way to deliver information about the local government's energy and climate efforts to the public. Residents, businesses and other stakeholders can learn about their local government's climate action efforts, review progress reports, learn who is involved in the planning process, understand their role in achieving the local government's climate action goals, and learn about upcoming educational events and meetings from websites.

B. How to implement this action

Create a webpage on an existing website or create a new website dedicated to the local government's energy and climate efforts. Information or features to incorporate into the website can include the following:

- Reports (e.g., GHG emissions inventory reports, progress reports)
- Plans (e.g., a climate action plan or comprehensive plan with components focusing on energy and climate)
- List of internal and external advisory committee members
- Sponsors and partners
- Calendar of events related to the actions in the plan hosted by the local government or a third party such as a local non-profit
- CSC task force meeting minutes
- Actions residents and businesses can take to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience
- Webpage or form for people to enter feedback and ideas
- Risk and vulnerability maps and tracked indicators
- Local, state, national, and international resources and links

Local governments ought to consider staff capacity to build and maintain these sites and well as whether the local government has the technical expertise to build the site or if the local government must hire a third party to build the site.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Implementing this action may take a couple months to a year depending on whether the local government seeks to create an entirely new website with a new design, or webpages as part of the government's existing website. The number of pages and functionality of the site will also dictate the cost and time frame for building the site. Project costs may include staff time, consultants' time, volunteer time, and hosting the website. Local governments should assign a staff member to regularly monitor the site and update the site's content.

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 efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. Other potentially responsible departments could include the chief elected official’s office, environmental educators or public affairs specialists, or the departments of environment or planning.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Points are earned by creating a website that is actively updated and communicates the local government’s commitment to climate action and how residents, businesses and other stakeholders can engage in addressing that commitment. The website must include the following components, at a minimum:

	<u>Possible Points</u>
• Description of the local government’s climate-related plans, goals, and efforts	1
• Comprehensive information on what residents and businesses can do to reduce their GHG emissions and prepare for the changing climate	1
• Links to relevant plans, policies, or other documentation	1

F. What to submit

Local governments must submit a link to a webpage or website that provides information about the local government’s energy and climate efforts. Local governments should demonstrate how the website meets each of the requirements for points for this action. New content must be posted to the website within the past year.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- Albany, NY, Mayor’s Office of Energy and Sustainability: <http://www.albanyustainability.org/>
- New Rochelle, NY, Sustainability Page: <http://www.newrochelleny.com/index.aspx?nid=346>
- New York, NY, PlaNYC 2030: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/home/home.shtml>

H. Recertification requirements

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

9.5 USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS

Action pathway phase: Monitor and report

Eligibility timeline: Currently active

Total possible points: 3

A. Why is this action important?

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr are used to connect audiences of all demographics, and to inform and engage the public on events as they are happening. It is important to analyze how these platforms can help the local government distribute information about the community's energy and climate efforts, and solicit participation and input from the public in real-time.

B. How to implement this action

Using social media to engage the community can be a low-cost and effective method, but it is important for local governments to consider which platform will best serve their needs as well as their capacity to build and maintain the account(s). Local governments should take the following considerations into account when deciding how to use social media:

- Who is the target audience? Which social media platforms are they most likely to use?
- What type of information must be communicated?
- Which platform(s) provide the framework to do what the local government wants to do (e.g., If the local government wants to get information out quickly in real-time, a platform such as Twitter may be useful)
- What is the staff capacity to build and maintain the accounts?
- What local, regional, or national organizations' or individuals' accounts should the local government connect to for the greatest exposure?
- At what frequency does the local government want to post content (e.g., a couple times a day, once a day, every couple days)?
- Does the press office have any requirements or policies around using social media that must be taken into account?
- What mechanisms have been established for rapid review?

Local governments should consider developing guidelines for using and managing the selected social media accounts. The guidelines should cover the process for updating the accounts, any necessary approvals for posting certain types of updates, and any standard language or communications policies relevant to using the account.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

Building a social media account can take as little as an hour or up to a few days depending on how much content the local government seeks to post and how many layers of people are involved with creating, approving, and posting content and connecting to other accounts. Costs associated with building and maintaining social media accounts may include staff time and annual fees to operate the accounts.

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 any local government. Departments that are most likely to be involved can vary and may include the mayor's office, sustainability or energy departments, planning departments or boards and committees that manage energy and climate efforts in the local government.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Create a social media account such as a Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Tumblr account or other innovative methods to inform the community about local government efforts and engage the community in accomplishing the actions to which the local government has committed.

F. What to submit

Local governments must submit the web-addresses of their social media accounts and demonstrate how the accounts have been used to support energy and climate initiatives. New content must have been posted within one year prior to the application date. If applicable, local governments should submit their social media guidelines as well.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- Dobbs Ferry, NY, Renew Dobbs Ferry Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Renew-Dobbs-Ferry/127823973917389>
- Bedford, NY, Energize Bedford Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/EnergizeBedford>
- Albany, NY, Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/AlbanyEandS>
- Albany, NY Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability Twitter account:
<https://twitter.com/AlbanyEandS>

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