

# Climate Smart Communities Certification Program



Certification Manual

## PLEDGE ELEMENT 10: COMMIT TO AN EVOLVING PROCESS

Monitor and report on progress toward achieving goals. Be willing to consider new ideas and adjust existing approaches. Ensure strategies and plans are up to date. Compare successes and cooperate with neighboring communities. Maintain involvement of stakeholders.

Action #	Action Name	Action Pathway Phase	Possible Points	Priority
<b>Pledge Element 10: Commit to an evolving process</b>			<b>11</b>	
<a href="#">10.1</a>	Report on progress annually	Monitor and report	4	
<a href="#">10.2</a>	Update strategies and plan(s)	Assess, plan, govern	4	
<a href="#">10.3</a>	Cooperate with neighboring communities and partner agencies	Build capacity	3	

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

### 10.1 REPORT ON PROGRESS ANNUALLY

**Action pathway phase:** Monitor and Report

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 1 year prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 4

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

Local climate action is an evolving process, which begins with an initial commitment, as part of Pledge Element 1, and continues with planning, implementation, and reporting. A regular reporting process helps to highlight progress and provides the opportunity to inform and engage the public and key stakeholders, while also identifying problems and opportunities to adapt existing approaches. During the implementation process, local governments must review progress to date and adjust implementation plans as necessary.

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

Local governments may implement this action by releasing a progress report once a year to the public. Progress reports typically include the following information:

- Brief history of the local government’s energy and climate work to date, including the following:
  - Local government operations GHG inventory results
  - Community-wide GHG inventory results
  - Local government and community-wide short-, medium-, and long-term GHG reductions
  - Priority GHG reduction actions
- Results (e.g., cost savings, GHG reduction) and implementation status (e.g., not started, in progress, complete) per action
- Challenges encountered
- Next steps
- New funding sources per action

This action is focused on developing an annual, public progress report. Local governments may want to use the same information for internal reporting and to manage implementation progress throughout the year, which could also be made available online.

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

The time frame for implementing this action is ongoing with a larger investment of time leading up to the release of the annual progress report and will vary greatly depending upon the complexity of content reported and local government. Local governments typically begin work on the progress report within two to three months of the targeted release date. Project costs for this action may include staff time, intern time, copy editor’s time, and 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 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 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**

Points are earned by developing and publicly releasing an annual progress report that addresses the climate actions in the climate action plan (or another related plan), status of implementation, and any problems or implementation challenges that affect the ability to implement the stated action.

## **F. What to submit**

Local governments must submit copies of their most recent progress reports, released within one year prior to the application date. The progress report must be a report on the local climate action plan if one exists, or other related action-oriented plan that includes substantial climate action.

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

- New York, NY, PlaNYC progress reports:  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/publications/publications.shtml>
- Portland, OR, Climate Action Plan Progress Report:  
<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/327050>

#### H. Recertification requirements

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

## 10.2 UPDATE STRATEGIES AND PLAN(S)

**Action pathway phase:** Assess, plan, govern

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

**Total possible points:** 4

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

As circumstances change and new opportunities or challenges arise, local governments must review and update climate action strategies and the associated planning documents. Regularly updating a climate action plan (or sustainability plan) ensures that it is a living document that charts the course for the local government's energy, climate, and sustainability efforts.

#### B. How to implement this action

The process for updating a climate action plan is similar to the process for developing an initial climate action plan. Local governments can follow the guidelines below for structuring their planning processes:

##### ***Project Mobilization:***

- Convene an internal advisory committee composed of representatives from all departments
- Organize an external advisory board composed of key stakeholders (if the original advisory board remains active, review the board membership and determine if it must be modified)
- Develop a project plan and timeline for the plan update
- Develop a draft scope of work for the plan update, with key tasks and proposed updates or changes to the plan

##### ***Analyze and Develop Strategies:***

- Review the strategies in the current plan and determine, based on current implementation plans, if they are sufficient to allow the community to meet its government operations and community-wide emissions reductions goals
- Adjust existing strategies and add new strategies as appropriate
- Expand the scope of the plan, as appropriate
- Review the GHG emissions reductions targets and revise or update as appropriate
- Develop a draft plan for public input

### ***Gather Public Input:***

- Perform public outreach to gather input on updates to existing strategies and new strategies
- Use a variety of outreach methods to engage the public, such as town hall meetings, social media, direct outreach to key stakeholders, and other approaches

### ***Finalize and Release the Plan***

- Incorporate feedback from the outreach process and finalize the plan
- Release the plan at a public event with the highest elected official

Alternatively, an updated appendix to the original plan with revised or new strategies can be developed. Ideally, the GHG reduction benefits of each strategy have been estimated and provided. The public should also have an opportunity to either assist with the development of or, at a minimum, provide comment on the new or revised strategies.

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

The time frame to update a climate action plan is similar to the timing involved in developing an initial climate action plan; however, local governments will benefit from having completed the planning process before. The level of effort involved in updating the plan depends on the scope of the proposed changes and updates to the plan. Local governments typically need about one year to update a climate action plan or similar plan. Project costs may include staff time, intern time, consultants' time, and marketing materials. Resource needs may include information-technology equipment to deliver presentations and for hosting meetings online for those who cannot attend in person, meeting space, and tools to conduct analyses. Developing an appendix with new strategies may not take as long so a slight reduction in project costs could be achieved, but the resource needs will be similar to that of a full climate action plan update.

### **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. 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**

Local governments must demonstrate how they have updated a government operations and/or community climate action plan (or related plan), or developed an appendix to the original plan with updated or new strategies, within five years prior to the application date.

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

Local governments must submit a finalized and publicly released updated climate action plan or similar plan. The update to the plan must have taken place within five years prior to the application date.

### **G. Linked to additional resources of best practices**

- New York, NY, PlaNYC 2011 Update:  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/theplan/the-plan.shtml>

#### H. Recertification requirements

Both the government operations and community climate action plans developed for original certification must have been updated within the five years prior to application for recertification.

### 10.3 COOPERATE WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES AND PARTNER AGENCIES

**Action pathway phase:** Build capacity

**Eligibility timeline:** Within 3 years prior to the application date

**Total possible points:** 3

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

Actions to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate require local, regional, state, and national cooperation and involvement. Local governments can often achieve economies of scale and greater impact by cooperating with neighboring communities to implement complementary initiatives or collaborate on one cross-cutting issue that spans jurisdictional boundaries such as flooding.

#### B. How to implement this action

Collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions or partner agencies can take many forms and depends on the topic to be addressed. Local governments may elect to collaborate to jointly fund a climate and energy manager or sustainability coordinator position, develop a regional building retrofit program, deliver technical assistance or green jobs training, develop a regional adaptation plan, engage the public on topics of joint interest, or implement actions from the regional sustainability plan.

While developing a climate action plan, or as part of the implementation process, local governments should identify actions that require collaboration or support from other jurisdictions, regional agencies, or state departments.

Local governments should consider the following when determining how to collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and partner organizations:

- Define how collaboration will help all parties achieve their objectives
- Assess existing platforms for collaboration (e.g., regional sustainability planning consortia, CSC task forces)
- Determine the best suited person(s) within the partner organizations or jurisdictions to address the reason for collaboration
- Identify the process by which the initiative can be executed, funding sources for implementation, etc.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding or similar document outlining the shared objectives, approach to collaboration, and specific actions for the various participants
- Determine the best platform to celebrate the outcomes of the collaboration

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

The time frame for implementing this action depends on a range of factors, including the number of stakeholders involved and complexity of the action. Project costs may include staff time, funds to support an action or purchase, consulting services if the initiative requires analysis the stakeholders are unable to conduct, etc. Resource needs may include meeting space, information-technology

equipment, food and beverages for working meetings and the launch event (if one is held) for the purpose of informing and engaging the public about the initiative.

**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, although it depends on the nature of the collaboration. 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**

Local governments can earn points for this action by demonstrating cooperation with neighboring communities and relevant agencies on the implementation of a joint climate mitigation or climate adaptation initiative. Local governments are eligible for points for this action if they actively participated in the development of a Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Plan, or have devoted significant resources to training or mentoring staff, volunteers or residents of another community in climate or energy action.

**F. What to submit**

Local governments must submit meeting minutes, memorandum of understanding, or a report that explains how the local government collaborated with neighboring jurisdictions or partner agencies and the outcome. The collaboration must have taken place within three years prior to the application date or be currently active. If submitting meeting minutes, local governments should submit documentation for three meetings.

**G. Linked to additional resources of best practices**

- Northern Westchester Energy Action Consortium: <http://www.nweac.org/>
- Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN, solar partnership: <http://stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=3479>
- Intermunicipal agreement for a watershed:  
[http://www.hudsonwatershed.org/plans09/wappinger\\_watershed\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.hudsonwatershed.org/plans09/wappinger_watershed_agreement.pdf)  
<http://www.hudsonwatershed.org/plans09/sawmill.pdf>

**H. Recertification requirements**

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