

Communications and Workplan: Support to the New York Climate Smart Communities Program

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Summary of the Original Scope of Work (SOW):

The original SOW directs the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy (The Bloustein School) to develop a searchable database of “best practices” in greenhouse gas emissions reductions, energy efficiency, and climate adaptation planning through:

- Infrastructure investment
- Building codes
- Land use planning
- Green infrastructure
- Housing policy (i.e., location)
- Transportation systems (including transit and freight)

This searchable database is to serve as the foundation for a “toolkit” for the Climate Smart Communities. Both the searchable database and the toolkit are to be designed to address the needs of the Climate Smart Communities as ascertained through a comprehensive needs assessment.

Kick-off Meeting June 22, 2012:

Jeanne Herb, Veda Truesdale, and Stacy Perrine met with Jennifer Manierre and Mark Lowery in late June at the NYSERDA NYC office to have a “kick-off” meeting, reviewing the original scope of work (SOW) and making revisions and clarifications based on the developments that had taken place since the scope was originally developed. While the substance of the scope of work remains the same, some minor changes and clarifications were made as follows:

1. The most substantive change was Task 2. It was agreed that because all of the regional coordinators are conducting needs assessments within their own scopes of work, it would be redundant for The Bloustein School to do one as well. Instead, it was decided that The Bloustein School would schedule calls with each of the regional coordinators to determine the primary needs, concerns, and priorities of the Climate Smart Communities.

2. The participants agreed that the toolkit will be the web interface that facilitates end-user access to the searchable database.
3. The SOW-intended outreach and communications plan will actually serve as a work plan (this document), which will detail how The Bloustein School will fulfill the terms of the scope of work.
4. The Bloustein School will need to have regular and ongoing discussions with the information technology professionals at DEC to ensure data compatibility and consistency with DEC's website rules and policies. The Bloustein School will involve its IT professionals in these discussions as well in order to ensure a common understanding of approach.
5. Rather than referring to "best practices" this project will refer to "leading practices" to more accurately reflect the fact that many of the practices are relatively new and have not undergone a level of vetting that would allow one to conclude that any given practice is the best.

Major Project Tasks:

1. Attend kick off meeting

The Bloustein School's representatives will participate in an in-person kick-off meeting at NYSERDA offices in Albany, NY.

DELIVERABLE: Attendance at CSC Pilot Kick-Off Meeting hosted by NYSERDA,

TIMEFRAME: June 2012.

STATUS: Completed.

2. Conduct conversations with Climate Smart Communities Regional Coordinators to determine:

- Sustainable community policies of greatest interest to CSCs for which assistance is needed;
- Capacity and willingness of CSCs to adopt varying complexity of actions and policies;
- Most helpful forms of communication to convey various types of information to CSC Communities (e.g., workshops, newsletters, social media, conference calls, webinars);
- obstacles that CSC Communities have encountered or are anticipating to encounter when implementing sustainability actions and policies;
- Legal, political, organizational and financial structures affecting CSC Communities to inform determination of those policies and practices throughout the TCI region that may be most transferable to CSC Communities; and

- Nature of specific technical assistance needed by CSC Communities to effectively develop local climate action plans and to participate in development of regional sustainability plans under the Cleaner, Greener Communities Program.
- Specific needs for direct, “as needed” assistance by CSC Communities whether individualized or as a group of CSC Communities.

DELIVERABLE: Summary overview of the priority needs of Climate Smart Communities.
TIMEFRAME: August and September 2012.

STATUS: During this stage The Bloustein School has held conversations with all of the regional coordinators. While most of the regional coordinators have not yet conducted the formal needs-assessment portion of their work, they are all already familiar with the communities in their region. Consequently, despite the lack of a formal needs assessment, The Bloustein School has been able to tease out a set of common concerns and priorities among the Climate Smart Communities. By the end of September the more robust needs assessments are expected to be completed and the regional coordinators will share the outcome of these assessments with The Bloustein School to inform our next steps. The results of the needs assessments are critical to the next stages of the project. The regional coordinators also recommended a number of follow-up connections that The Bloustein School will speak with.

3. Prepare a Work Plan.

The Bloustein School will develop a workplan detailing the updated scope of work with additional details and an updated timeframe allowing for completion of the contract in April of 2013.

DELIVERABLE: Complete workplan

TIMEFRAME: Submit to NYSERDA by August 31, 2012

STATUS: Completed.

4. Provide a bridge to New York’s Climate Smart Communities efforts with the sustainable communities’ efforts of the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI). (Ongoing)

The Bloustein School will play a “bridge” role between the CSC efforts of NYS and the efforts of the sustainable community efforts of the TCI to ensure that innovative sustainable community efforts being examined or developed through TCI are highlighted for CSC participants through this outreach and education effort. **Additionally,** The Bloustein School will work with New York State agencies to identify sustainable community and smart growth policies under consideration in New York to determine those that may be useful to pilot or model through TCI. As part of this effort, The Bloustein School staff may attend TCI meetings that are of particular relevance to the CSC effort.

DELIVERABLE: Section in final report outlining the results of TCI coordination efforts.

TIMEFRAME: Ongoing.

STATUS: Currently TCI is primarily working on state-level efforts. Over the course of the next year TCI's Sustainable Communities Working Group will begin working on local and regional level actions. As that work progresses The Bloustein School will integrate those findings into the searchable database as appropriate.

5. Summarize “leading practices” of sustainability within NYS and in other TCI states to identify practices planned or in place.

The Bloustein School will prepare a searchable database of elements of sustainable community efforts at both the state and local government levels that may be most relevant and transferable to CSC participants in light of the results of the needs assessment survey. Sources for identifying these practices will include, but are not limited to, outcomes of the TCI, peer reviewed and grey literature, and federal and state reports. Key issues regarding transferability to New York will be assessed and specific practices will be recommended and tailored for CSC participants. Additionally, some practices will be developed as a general recommendation for CSC participants.

As part of the development of a “leading practices” database, The Bloustein School will, to the extent feasible, identify critical underlying characteristics of the leading practices that will allow CSC participants to understand the extent to which leading practices are transferable to their own needs, including reviewing:

- Underlying laws and authorities governing the leading practice (if any);
- Resources needed to implement practice;
- Factors (legal, organizational, managerial, resource, etc.) essential to effectiveness of the “leading practice;”
- “Lessons learned” / case studies from implementation of the practice and recommendations from practitioners;
- To the extent available, an understanding of the cost effectiveness of the practice using existing literature and case studies;
- Metrics used to track outcomes of the practice
- Geographic setting most relevant to the practice (i.e., rural, urban);
- Key partners essential for implementation of the practice;
- To the extent available, any evaluation of the outcomes of the practice.

The searchable database shall summarize the practices in accordance with the following organizational structure:

- Establishing baselines/data collection
- Goal setting and visioning

- Master planning
- Metrics
- Local ordinances
- Regional agreements

The searchable database will serve as the foundation of a “toolkit” for the Climate Smart Communities.

The Bloustein School will take the following steps to develop this compendium, which will form the basis of the searchable database:

Database Content:

- Review existing lists and databases of leading practices developed via other projects (TCI).
- Conduct a literature search using academic databases and internet search engines.
- Develop a simple database of ordinances, policies, agreements, incentive programs, performance measures, planning mechanisms, case studies, and peer-reviewed paper citations.
- Cross-reference the simple database with the outcomes of the needs assessment to determine areas requiring additional research. During this stage The Bloustein School will continue to work with DEC and NYSERDA to ensure that all materials developed for the final searchable database and web-based toolkit are consistent with the information technology systems in place at DEC.
- Conduct formal and informal interviews as necessary to locate additional sources of guidance documents or information.

Database Structure:

- Hold ongoing discussions with NYSDEC and NYSERDA regarding database structure and content to ensure usability for the end-user and to ensure compatibility with NYDEC’s database and web management system. Conversations thus far have led to agreement that the available search criteria must be meaningful to the target audience of local officials and concerned citizen. As such, all actions will have to be categorized by a wide range of attributes. While The Bloustein School will continue to refine the list of attributes as determined to be necessary, a preliminary list of attributes to be included is as follows:
 - Name of action
 - Statutory requirements associated with action
 - Type of action (establishing baselines, data collection, goal **setting and visioning**, master planning, metrics, ordinance, regional agreement, case study, other)
 - Area of interest (buildings, streets, infrastructures, etc.)

- Timing of reductions (immediate, medium term, long term)
- Time necessary for implementation of action
- Cost-benefit, cost effectiveness, or some other measure of costs
- Climate impact
- Required level of expertise (e.g., "requires professional planner" or "requires professional input" or "community initiative")

DELIVERABLE: Searchable database of leading practices

TIMEFRAME: Draft available January 2013.

STATUS: In progress. The Bloustein School, NYSERDA, and DEC have had two discussions on database content and technical issues. The Bloustein School has several simple databases on community sustainability actions, that will be culled and sorted in the early fall (September and early October 2012.)

6. Conduct three webinars with the CSCs and regional coordinators.

As part of its ongoing outreach efforts, The Bloustein School will develop three webinars for the Climate Smart Communities and the regional coordinators.

- The first webinar will focus on the current state of knowledge regarding the relationship between GHG emissions and land-use. This webinar will differentiate between those practices with directly calculable greenhouse gas emissions reductions and those practices for which greenhouse gas emissions reductions cannot be directly calculated.
- The second webinar will provide the CSC and regional coordinators with an update on The Bloustein School' tasks up to this point and will solicit feedback from the CSCs on additional content that should be added to the database.
- The final webinar will serve to beta test the toolkit for overall usability.

DELIVERABLE: completed webinars

TIMEFRAME: October, January, and March

STATUS: Not yet started

7. Toolkit Development:

The Bloustein School will produce a toolkit for general support to all CSC participants. The toolkit will be based on the leading practices database developed in Task 5. This toolkit will take the form of a web-based interface that facilitates users' access to the searchable database. The Bloustein School will develop a draft prototype and wireframe for approval by NYSERDA and NYSDEC prior to beginning development of the toolkit.

NYSERDA, NYSDEC and The Bloustein School have agreed that the toolkit will be the web-based interface that allows local officials from Climate Smart Communities (and any other users who choose to access the toolkit via the DEC website) to easily access the

database and find recommendations and guidance on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the six areas listed above.

DELIVERABLE: Web-interface drawing on the searchable database

TIMEFRAME: March 2013

STATUS: Not yet started. The Bloustein School, NYSERDA, and NYSDEC have had several discussions regarding the structure of the web-interface and its functionality. The web-interface will enable the end-user, assumed to be a municipal planning board member or engaged citizen, to enter basic information such as town name and then select areas of interest or local priorities. The site will then generate a report or list of actions appropriate for that community, drawing on both the information entered, and on data drawn from publicly available databases. Rutgers, NYSERDA, and NYSDEC will continue to discussion design of the web-interface as the project progresses.

Project Timeline

July –August:

- Background research.
- Conduct needs Assessment conversations with regional coordinators.
- Conduct discussions with NYSERDA and NYSDEC regarding structure and content of database and toolkit.

September –October:

- Additional discussion regarding database and toolkit structure and content.
- Receive output of complete needs assessments from regional coordinators.
- Cross-reference the simple database with the outcomes of the needs assessment to determine areas requiring additional research.
- Conduct additional research or interviews as necessary to address gaps between existing set of community sustainability actions and needs of CSC participants.
- At the end of this phase we will have a complete compendium of resources to address the community needs to extent that is possible given the state of knowledge in these areas.
- Interview subject area experts as necessary.
- Conduct webinar on the current state of research on GHG emissions and land-use practices and policies.

November – December:

- Review database content to evaluate its consistency across all current climate initiatives in New York including Cleaner, Greener Communities, The New York State Climate Action Council, State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act, and the Transportation Climate Initiative.
- Continue the development of the final database including data entry.

January

- Conduct our second webinar, dedicated to sharing the progress of our work thus far and getting feedback from end-users.
- Finalize data entry into database.
- Website development using feedback from the webinar.

February

- Continue development of the toolkit.

- Write final report.
- Conduct additional research as necessary based on feedback from webinar.

March- April

- Beta test the toolkit
- Finalize report.
- Conduct additional outreach as allowed by time and budget, e.g., workshops.