



CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES – MID-HUDSON VALLEY REGION REGIONAL CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

VHB Engineering, Surveying and Landscaping Architecture, P.C. (VHB), in collaboration with ICF International and Hamel Environmental Consulting, is pleased to provide this Regional Climate Smart Communities Strategy which outlines the process for delivering services and resources to Climate Smart Communities (CSC) in the Mid-Hudson Valley under the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program. The proposed approach for the three-year pilot program includes developing a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory, conducting research about existing CSC participants, connecting with CSC participants to determine their specific needs, and delivering top-notch resources and educational opportunities as well as one-on-one tailored assistance. In addition to working closely with existing CSC participants, the VHB Team will reach out to a broader audience throughout the pilot region to promote the successes of the CSC Program and to recruit and engage new CSC participants.

In order to assess and deliver the services and resources to the CSC participants, the VHB Team will employ a variety of methods and tools. These methods, which are described in detail in this strategy, include:

- *Conducting a survey of existing climate protection efforts using online survey tools;*
- *Creating an inventory of local government information and progress using a cloud-based technology;*
- *Conducting in-person consultations to assess the individual needs and create a strategy for moving beyond climate protection barriers;*
- *Creating climate protection technical guides and quick-tip sheets that provide direction and guidance on how to achieve the CSC pledge elements; and*
- *Organizing in-person trainings and webinars to provide learning opportunities at a variety of scales to local governments throughout the Mid-Hudson Valley Region and the state.*

VHB has developed an online database, to track and report the progress of, and interaction with, Mid-Hudson Valley local governments. The VHB Team will use the online database to create an account for each CSC participant which will include the CSC pledge elements it has achieved to-date, the contacts for the CSC Program, and VHB correspondence with the local government liaisons. Reports can be developed on-demand for each of these areas.

Throughout the Pilot Program, the VHB Team will provide a consistent level and quality of service to each CSC participant through three internal teams: 1) the *Recruitment and Marketing Team*; 2) the *Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team*; and 3) the *Resources and Tools Team*. The three teams will work in concert to develop templates and tools, establish the database of CSC participants and their actions, and support the on-the-ground implementation of the Regional CSC Strategy. The Recruitment and Marketing Team will identify and engage potential recruits, drive local marketing efforts, and identify and document the best practices of anchor projects in the Mid-Hudson Valley. The Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team will facilitate in-person consultations; and deliver technical assistance in their areas of expertise. This team will also tap the support and experience of key partners and experts, including Hamel Environmental Consulting. The final team, Resources and Tools, is comprised of technical experts from VHB and ICF International and will be responsible for creating top-notch, easy-to-use technical templates, guidebooks and one-page tip sheets; and coordinating local education and training opportunities. We are excited to proceed with this project and look forward to working with the Mid-Hudson Valley CSC participants to boost their climate protection efforts to the next level.



DEVELOP A MID-HUDSON GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS INVENTORY

The VHB Team, in collaboration with ICF International, will conduct a regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory, allocated to the municipal level, for the seven-county Mid-Hudson Valley Region (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester Counties). The purpose of the regional GHG emissions inventory is to provide the Climate Smart Communities and Cleaner Greener Communities programs with a baseline against which to compare future inventories to show progress and reductions in GHG emissions. The regional GHG emissions inventory will quantify the emissions in the region for the baseline year of 2010 from a variety of sectors including, but not limited to, residential, commercial, transportation, agricultural, and waste. The VHB Team will follow the methodology created through participation in the New York State Regional Greenhouse Gas Working Group and the Environmental Protection Agency's Draft Regional GHG Inventory Guidance and to develop the final inventory. In addition to creating a baseline for the Mid-Hudson Valley region, the results of the inventory may also be used to inform the development of the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan to the extent that it is helpful in prioritizing projects and strategies that achieve quantifiable reductions in GHGs. The regional GHG emissions inventory will be completed in the fall of Year One.

CREATE A HUDSON VALLEY CLIMATE SMART ADVISORY COMMITTEE

VHB is proposing to work with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) to develop a Hudson Valley Climate Smart Advisory Committee (Committee). The Committee will be comprised of existing CSC participants and, in Year One, will be responsible for recommending this Regional CSC Strategy for NYSERDA's approval. The Committee will also discuss ways to continue to engage stakeholders that can assist local governments with accomplishing their climate protection goals. Over a six-month time period in Year One, the Committee will meet twice. Minutes will be taken at each meeting and circulated to the Committee. Recruitment for the Committee will begin in summer 2012 and the first meeting will take place in the fall. Engagement of the Committee and its specific role in future years will be voted on by the Committee themselves.

CONNECTING WITH NEW & SUPPORTING EXISTING CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

1. Recruiting for and Marketing the CSC Program

Recruiting New Climate Smart Communities

VHB is proposing a phased approach to recruitment throughout the three-year pilot program. Year One efforts will be focused on providing much-needed resources and support to sustain the existing Climate Smart Communities in their climate protection efforts. A number of the resources and services that are designed for existing Climate Smart Communities are easily transferrable or require the same amount of resources to provide to one or 100 communities and will be available to any community interested in the CSC program. The Recruitment and Marketing Team will use the following approaches to identify and engage potential CSC participants in Year One and beyond:

- Assess the current climate protection activities of other communities in the region through research, discussions with current CSC participants, the Hudson Valley Climate Smart Advisory Committee, partners in the region, and through attendance at events.
- Based on the research and knowledge of the region, the Team will develop criteria for reaching out to new communities, which may include, but not be limited to, local governments who have conducted or are conducting GHG emissions inventories; are participating in a regional consortium or other effort (i.e., NWEAC and SWEAC); are adjacent to other CSCs where they could leverage the support of their peers and combine resources to achieve additional pledge elements; are members of ICLEI and/or other climate or sustainability-related campaigns.



- Invite potential CSC participants to in-person trainings and webinars. CSC Program materials will be available at all in-person events and a stock slide presentation will be created about “How to Become a Climate Smart Community.”

VHB anticipates that a buzz will be created after Year One by providing 42 existing CSC participants with in-person consultations (see below), webinars and trainings, and valuable climate protection services and resources. The goal is to create raving fans who will promote the benefits of participating in the Climate Smart Communities network. However, in Years Two and Three we are anticipating ramping up the number of targeted webinars, trainings and presentations at events that focus on the benefits of the CSC Program, in addition to more rigorous recruitment of new CSC participants by using the criteria developed in Year One.

Marketing the CSC Program and CSC Successes

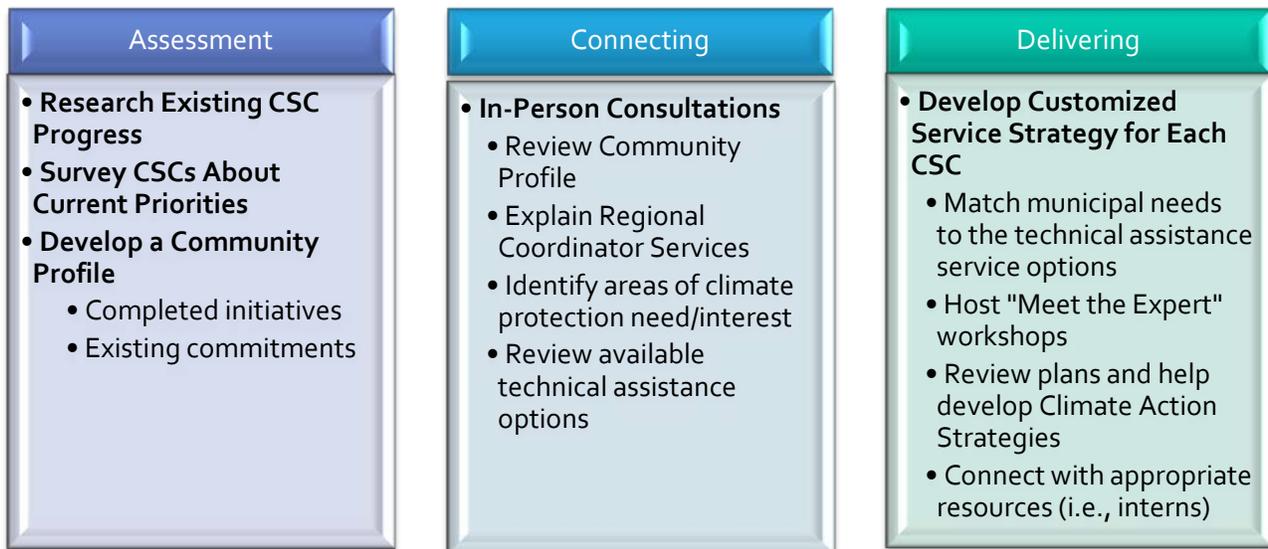
In order to raise the visibility of both the CSC Program and climate change issues, marketing strategies will be developed that are diverse and broad reaching. A variety of tools will be utilized to this end, including the use of social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook and Twitter will be used to: announce workshops, trainings and webinars applicable to CSC participants; promote best practices in achieving the CSC pledge elements and anchor projects (i.e., spotlight on a new solar field or innovative employee engagement program); communicate the resources that have been developed through this pilot program, for instance where to find an intern, the release of the Climate Action Plan Guidebook, etc.; and to build enthusiasm and interest from existing and potential new CSC participants. It is anticipated that the CSC social media sites will also take advantage of the established network of climate and sustainability networks such as Northern Westchester Energy Action Council (NWEAC - <http://www.nweac.org/>), Southern Westchester Energy Action Council (SWEAC - <http://www.sweac.org/>), Energize Bedford (<http://energizebedford.org/>), state chapters of the American Planning Association and American Public Works Association and other aligned organizations. By linking to these networks, the CSC Facebook and Twitter accounts will increase its visibility and attract followers. The Recruitment and Marketing Team will also work with these organizations to promote the CSC Program through their newsletters and other member outreach techniques (including listservs). VHB will assess the success of utilizing various social media in Year One to devise a strategy for use in Years Two and Three.

One of the primary methods of marketing this program, however, will be through identification of and participation in local, regional and even statewide events such as workshops, conferences, seminars, meetings and other events where the Recruitment and Marketing Team can promote the CSC Program successes to local governments and other key stakeholders. The VHB Team is connected to several active professional networks with primarily municipal audiences such as the American Planning Association and the American Public Works Association. Members of these networks oftentimes serve as the CSC Program elected official or staff liaison. The Team will also tap into other networks of municipal staff and elected officials, businesses, and academia to find diverse and appropriate audiences to promote the CSC Program and its successes. For example, the VHB Team spoke at a NWEAC conference in the spring 2012 and was invited to speak at the Hudson Valley Climate Change Network in August 2012. VHB will continue to work with these and other networks to increase exposure to the CSC Program.



2. Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery

To properly execute the goals of the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program, VHB is proposing to work with existing CSC participants directly. The direct engagement process that will be implemented can be broken down into three steps: 1) Community Assessment; 2) Connecting with the Communities; and 3) Delivering Customized Services. This framework will allow the Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team to provide quality, relevant services that respond to the local government's individual needs. The chart below outlines the process.



It is envisioned that the above framework will continue throughout the three- year pilot project. The Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team will annually conduct an in-person meeting and develop a Customized Service Strategy based on the varying needs of the CSC. Community Profiles will be developed as new communities take the CSC pledge and will be updated on a regular basis throughout the pilot program.

Step 1: Community Assessment

To begin the Assessment step, the Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team conducted desktop research on the progress each community has made in achieving the ten CSC pledge elements. In addition to the information provided by NYSERDA and DEC, an online "background check" on every community was conducted to determine and confirm what had been achieved. The Team also collected supporting information, including GHG emissions inventories, climate action plans, zoning ordinances, and other documentation. All of this information was input into the online database.

The Team's research to date determined that the local governments in the Mid-Hudson Valley region are in varying stages of the climate action planning process. For example, VHB ran a report on the number of local governments that have started or completed a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and determined that 10 communities, or 30% of the 42 CSC participants in the Mid-Hudson Valley Region are either working on or have completed a GHG emissions inventory.



In addition to the background research, a survey was developed using SurveyMonkey®. This survey sought to further determine the communities’ progress through the Climate Smart Communities pledge and to understand the specific areas where they would like to receive technical assistance, including conducting GHG emissions inventories, climate action planning, and developing and implementing cost effective climate protection strategies.

Based on the information that was collected to date, a Community Profile has been developed and will be provided to each CSC participant. The Community Profile (see Figure 1) includes pertinent information on the current climate protection efforts and the details of any completed pledge elements. The Community Profiles are a result of researching public documents, municipal websites and other anecdotal information available. These Profiles represent the baseline of each community’s activities and are instrumental in familiarizing the Team with the local government’s structure and level of commitment to the CSC pledge.

The Community Profiles are created directly from the online database and will be maintained by all members of the VHB Team. The online database will allow for the most accurate and timely records to be kept on each local government. At any time, a local government can contact the VHB Team and each member will have access to all necessary information through the database. The Team member can log notes from the call and document the action items. The Community Profiles will be provided to each CSC participant two weeks prior to the initial in-person meeting. This will allow the local government staff to provide any missing information or correct any errors. In addition, this Profile will allow community staff and officials to see what information is readily available about their CSC pledge efforts. The Profile will be used as a foundation for a discussion on which type of technical assistance will best meet the needs of each CSC participant. The Community Profiles are designed to be uploaded to the Climate Smart Communities website after final approval from the CSC participant so other participants can learn from their best practices.

Figure 1: Sample Community Profile

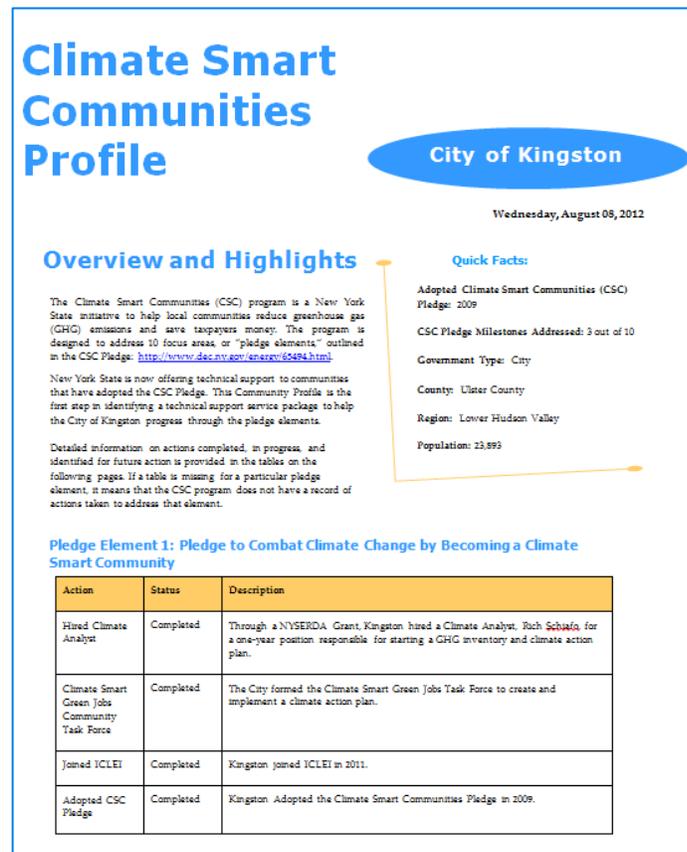




Figure 2: Online Database Screen Shot from Cortlandt, NY Account

Account Detail [Edit] [Delete] [Sharing]

Account Name	Town of Cortlandt [View Hierarchy]	Adopted CSC Pledge?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Industry	Government	Year Adopted CSC Pledge	2009
Government Type	Town	Website	
CSC Region	Lower Hudson Valley		
Parent Account	Westchester County		
2010 Population	41,592		

Member Affiliations

ICLEI Member?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Climate Registry	<input type="checkbox"/>
NWEAC Member?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SWEAC Member?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Address Information

Primary CSC Contact	Dani Glaser	Shipping Address	
Highest Ranking Official	Linda Puglisi	Billing Address	1 Heady Street Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567
Fax			
Phone			

Community Profile Summary

Community Profile Summary

Community Seal

Community Image

Custom Links

[Google Search](#)
[Google Maps](#)
[Google News](#)

[Edit] [Delete] [Sharing]

Contacts [New Contact] [Merge Contacts]

Action	Contact Name	Title	Email
Edit Del	Dani Glaser	Sustainability Consultant	dani@oreenteamspirit.com
Edit Del	Linda Puglisi	Supervisor	lindap@townofcortlandt.com

Action [New Action]

Action	Opportunity Name	Action Category	Pledge Element	Stage
Edit Del	Government GHG Reduction Target	Gov't GHG Reduction Target	2. Set Goals, Inventory Emissions, Move to Action	Completed
Edit Del	Community and Government GHG Inventory	Community and Gov't GHG Inventory	2. Set Goals, Inventory Emissions, Move to Action	In progress
Edit Del	Climate Action Plan	Climate Action Plan	2. Set Goals, Inventory Emissions, Move to Action	In progress
Edit Del	Geothermal HVAC	Renewable Energy Feasibility Study	4. Encourage Renewable Energy for Local Government Operations	Identified
Edit Del	Consolidation of Driving Routes	Fleet Energy Efficiency Upgrades	3. Decrease Energy Demand for Local Government Operations	Completed

Step 2: Connecting with the Communities

In-person consultations will be offered to all of the Climate Smart Communities in the Mid-Hudson Valley in Year One and annually thereafter. These meetings will allow the Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team to:

- Review the Community Profiles and their progress towards achieving the pledge elements
- Introduce the Regional Coordinator Services and overall pilot program
- Review current initiatives and projects they are working on
- Identify areas where they need assistance on accomplishing their climate protection efforts
- Identify what resources they have available
- Determine a customized approach for meeting their climate protection needs

The Team will send an invitation to the highest elected official and (where applicable) the primary staff liaison for the CSC Program to schedule the in-person meeting. Meetings will be scheduled with the elected official, staff and volunteers working on the CSC Task Force (where applicable). The meetings are anticipated to last approximately 2 hours. The community will be presented with a menu of technical assistance options focused on bringing the community to the next level of activity and closer to achieving the overall CSC pledge elements. All information gathered during the in-person meetings will be processed and used to create a Customized Service Strategy (see Step 3) that meets the desires and needs of the CSC participant.



The Climate Protection Customer Service Delivery Team consists of teams of two people to conduct these meetings. The teams will facilitate the in-person consultations that address: community progress to-date in achieving the pledge elements, the types of projects the community has implemented, and the results of the survey (where applicable).

The delivery of in-person consultations will be divided into two phases. The first phase will be in September and October 2012, with technical assistance provided directly to communities in the months following. The second will be in February and March 2013, with technical assistance for those communities being provided through May 2013. This approach will allow the VHB Team to consult with, and deliver high quality services to, a more intimate group of communities. It will also allow us to evaluate the approach mid-year and at the end of Year One, and to make any necessary modifications to service delivery for Years Two and Three.

Step 3: Delivering Customized Services

Each community will receive a Customized Service Strategy within two weeks of the in-person consultation. This strategy will summarize the in-person consultation and outline what the action item is, how it will be delivered, which team members will provide it, and when it will be completed. The Customized Service Strategy provided to each CSC participant will be based on several factors: the actions a local government has already completed to fulfill the CSC pledge, the resources and capacity of the local government, and their ultimate climate protection goals. Delivery of services will be tailored to meet the specific needs of the community and may take a variety of forms, including: a “Meet the Expert” session to discuss a climate protection issue in greater detail; a guidebook or quick-tip sheet that provides more direction and direction on a achieving a specific pledge element; or an in-person training (open to any CSC participant) that will allow communities to not-only move past their own barriers, but also benefit their CSC peers. More detail about the potential topics and types of resources that will be delivered can be found in the *Climate Protection Tool and Resource Development and Education: Trainings and Webinars* sections.

Local government acknowledgement and acceptance of the Strategy will be an important step to confirm that the CSC participant is still committed to the CSC Program goals and principles and is a straightforward way to communicate expectations of the level and type of technical assistance that will be provided. It is not anticipated that any formal legislative approval will be necessary for the acceptance of this strategy, but should be approved based on established internal procedures.

Each local government’s Customized Service Strategy will also include a defined timeline. Both short- and long-term strategies can be developed. All technical assistance strategies that are longer than six months will have at least one evaluation at the midway point to ensure that the strategy is still appropriate for the local government and delivering what is promised.

3. Climate Protection Tool and Resource Development

In addition to conducting in-person consultations with CSC participants, specific climate protection tools and resources will be developed to address the needs of the Mid-Hudson Valley local governments. This approach will allow the entire VHB Team to maximize service and resource delivery to local governments, and will also facilitate collaboration and cooperation among local governments in the region. The proposed resources and webinars that will be developed by the Resources and Tools Team are as follows:

- **Guidebook on Conducting GHG Emissions Inventories** – this resource will provide the instructions necessary to complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and will include:
 - A Review of both Government Operations and Community GHG Emissions Inventories



- Scopes, Sectors, Sources – general overview of what would typically be included in a Government or Community GHG Emissions Inventory
 - Recommended Protocols/Methods for conducting a GHG Emissions Inventory
 - Additional Resources to Reference throughout the process of conducting an Inventory
 - Templates for data collection, calculations and tracking data for future inventories
- **Guidebook for Creating a Climate Action Plan** – this guidebook will outline the necessary steps to creating a comprehensive Climate Action Plan, including:
 - A Plan Outline/Template
 - Strategies for Engaging the Community in Developing the Plan
 - How to Integrate the Results of the GHG Emissions Inventory
 - Example Climate Protection Strategies
 - **Quick-Tip Sheets** – these are 1- to 2-page “cheat” sheets that can be provided to communities on topics that are frequently asked during the GHG emissions inventory and climate action planning processes. These quick-tip sheets will allow VHB to answer common questions quickly and efficiently.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Quick-Tip Sheets:

- How to Choose a Baseline Year
- Forecasting Emissions – Should we do it? How? What is a BAU scenario?
- Deciding on Approach and Parameters for Your Inventory
- Linking Energy Baseline Assessments with GHG Inventories
- So Where Do I Get the Data? Tips for data sources and likely staff resources
- Choosing Emissions Factors
- Reporting
- Quality Control
- Replicating the GHG Emissions Inventory in Future Years – How to Track your Progress

Climate Action Planning Quick-Tips Sheets:

- Target Setting for Climate Action Plans
- Identifying Metrics and Tracking Implementation Progress

4. Education: Trainings and Webinars

To complement the one-on-one assistance to the CSC participants, VHB is proposing to host in-person trainings and online webinars focused on the interests and needs of the local governments. The various trainings and webinar options are presented in the following sections. Webinars and trainings will be coordinated by the Resources and Tools Team.

Trainings

The Resources and Tools Team is proposing to host two in-person trainings in the Mid-Hudson Valley region in Year One. The trainings will be designed to provide detailed guidance on climate protection topics and may include: Conducting a GHG Emissions Inventory, How to Implement a PACE program, and Conducting a Vulnerability Assessment (see Table 1 for additional potential training topics). The trainings that are scheduled will align with the research the Team has conducted about the needs of the CSC participants, the survey responses, and the results of the in-person consultations. The goal is to meet the needs of as many CSC participants as possible. The trainings will be eligible for continuing education credits and will be organized to accommodate the three primary learning styles: 1) listening; 2) seeing; and 3) experiencing. Trainings that are provided in Years Two and Three will build upon the topics presented in Year One and be designed to continue to support CSC efforts to achieve pledge elements.



Webinars

The Resources and Tools Team will coordinate with NYSERDA and the other Climate Smart Communities Regional Coordinators to schedule three webinars according to need as well as during specific months that align with the subject matter (e.g., October is Energy Awareness Month and April is National Volunteer Month and Earth Day is in April). Currently, VHB is committed to providing the following webinars in Year One: 1) Conducting a Vulnerability Assessment and Developing a Climate Adaptation Plan; 2) Developing a Climate Action Plan; and 3) Planning for Renewable Energy and Smart Grid Technology. Years Two and Three will include webinar topics that continue to advance the climate protection efforts of the CSC participants.

Webinars mostly accommodate the listening and seeing learning styles and are meant to provide a broader overview of a topic, while still delivering the necessary information a local government needs to apply the lessons learned. In addition to the traditional, listen-only webinar format, VHB is proposing to host more engaging webinars that allow attendees to interact with one another and the presenters before, during and after the webinar via email and online collaboration tools (such as Google Docs, Stixy, bubbl.us, and Dappleboard).

Table 1: Potential CSC Trainings and Webinars

POTENTIAL TOPIC	WEBINAR OR TRAINING
Conducting a Vulnerability Assessment and Preparing a Climate Adaptation Plan	BOTH
Maximizing Building Efficiency	BOTH
How to Develop a Climate Action Plan	BOTH
Creating an Effective Implementation Strategy	WEBINAR
Funding Your Climate Protection Work – Exploring Funding Options and Tips on Proposal Writing	WEBINAR
Applying the Regional GHG Emissions Inventory to Your Community and the Local Government Operations Protocol	BOTH
Planning for Renewable Energy and Smart Grid Technology	WEBINAR
Engaging Volunteers in Local Climate Protection and Sustainability Efforts	WEBINAR
Vehicle Fleet Efficiency & Integration of alternative fuel vehicles	WEBINAR



WORKING WITH KEY PARTNERS AND EXPERTS

Partners and experts are going to play an important role in this project. Partners and experts include existing stakeholders that are working in the region to support and advance climate protection efforts in the Mid-Hudson Valley. These can be non-profit organizations like Sustainable Hudson Valley, state agencies like the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, quasi-governmental organizations like the Hudson Valley Regional Council, and academic institutions like Pace University. Hamel Environmental Consulting will also be connecting the entire VHB Team to additional experts who can assist local governments with technical, more advanced climate protection issues.

In addition to providing expertise on specialized climate protection issues to some of the more “advanced” CSC participants, VHB anticipates their assistance in promoting the CSC Program and providing insight on recruitment opportunities. The specific roles we anticipate these partners playing include:

- Attending “Meet the Expert” meetings. These are one-on-one meetings with local governments to assist them in resolving a specific technical issue. This meeting would occur after their in-person consultation and be part of their service delivery.
- Providing expert advice and guidance on “advanced” climate protection questions and inquiries
- Staying in touch with local and regional events that we can promote to the CSC participants
- Directing VHB to relevant local and regional resources
- Presenting at trainings and webinars
- Posting updates to their respective social media outlets on the program and “spotlighting” community efforts through their networks
- Recruiting new CSC participants

A complete list of key partners and experts will be compiled before the in-person consultations are scheduled.

TRACKING AND REPORTING

Throughout the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator Pilot Program the VHB Team will work with NYSERDA, NYSDEC and other state agencies, as well as other regional coordinators, to share best practices and lessons learned and to provide feedback and evaluation of the program while it is being implemented.

The VHB Team will also comply with all reporting requirements established by NYSERDA including the quarterly conference calls. The team will submit annual report summarizing the successes and challenges of the CSC program and will include recommendations for modifications to the program moving forward.

In addition to the required reporting elements, VHB is proposing to provide updates to NYSERDA on the following:

- List of communities that have received an in-person consultation
- Progress of each community in accomplishing specific pledge element
- Posts and activity on Facebook and Twitter
- Conferences and events attended and presented at
- Promotion of the CSC Program through various media outlets
- Participants on trainings and webinars
- Number of communities interacted with (calls, meetings, workshops attended, etc.) and how often

