PE10 Action: GHG Tracking system

5 Points

A. Why is this action important?

To evaluate progress in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, local governments need a data management system to calculate, forecast, and track emissions from government operations. A GHG tracking system enables local governments to evaluate the benefits of programs and compare emissions from one year to the next and against their GHG targets. Communities may choose to develop their own systems for tracking GHG emissions (which could be as simple as a spreadsheet), or they may license an existing software application. The tracking system can be used to monitor GHG emissions from buildings, vehicle fleet, waste, and other sources. Some local governments use a GHG tracking system to develop their baseline emissions inventories and then use the same tool to update their inventories in subsequent years. In other cases, local governments implement GHG tracking systems after developing their baseline inventories and realizing that they need a more robust tool for managing data, evaluating progress, and informing decisions. Developing and maintaining such a system makes future updates to GHG inventories less onerous.

B. How to implement this action

Local governments can implement this action through the following steps:

1. *Determine the goals and requirements for the system:* At minimum, the system should track Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from local government operations. Should the system also track some Scope 3 emissions, such as those from employee commuting? (For definitions of Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 emissions, see *PE2 Action: Government Operations GHG Inventory*) Should the system be able to forecast future emissions, visualize alternative planning scenarios, and/or analyze the costs and benefits of potential policies and programs?
2. *Review available tools on the market:* Analyze the functionality, price, support services, customer base, and planned improvements for the GHG emissions management tools on the market. Review reports comparing the various software packages. Larger local governments should consider the ICLEI ClearPath tool; it is a comprehensive tracking system for conducting GHG inventories, forecasts, and monitoring at the community or government operations scale. Membership in ICLEI involves an annual fee based on municipal size and includes access to ClearPath.
3. *Develop a budget and a plan for managing the system:* Determine the initial budget for implementing the system, along with any budget or staff time needed to manage the system on an ongoing basis.
4. *Select the tool that best meets your requirements and budgetary constraints.*
5. *Implement the tool (including migrating data from any legacy systems).* Enter at least 12 months of GHG data into the system.
6. *Develop municipal protocols for entering data and maintaining the system:* Create user guides and/or procedures that are customized to the unique circumstances of the local government. The protocols should that focus on what steps users need to take to prepare to use the tracking system, maintain it over time, and report the results. Such municipal protocols are different from any instructions issued by creators of GHG tracking software. The municipal protocols documents should lay out instructions for updating the data in a consistent manner on a defined schedule and enable local government staff (or others, such as interns or contractors) to use the system with ease.

C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs

The time frame, costs, and resource needs for implementing a GHG tracking tool vary depending on the complexity of the selected tool and the provider. Tools may involve some upfront costs for implementation in addition to annual licensing

fees; however, some tools can simply be downloaded or used online with no implementation costs other than staff time.

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

A GHG emissions management system is often managed by the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) coordinator or staff member acting in this capacity, who could be in the chief elected official's office, the department of planning, public works, or environment.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments that implement a GHG tracking system that is consistent with the guidelines described here are eligible for five points.

F. What to submit

Submit documentation demonstrating that the GHG tracking system is operational (such as a report from the system or a screenshot of the system in use) and contains at least 12 months of GHG data. Also submit a copy of the protocols developed by the local government for entering GHG data, reporting results, and maintaining the tracking system over time.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA, ClearPath Tool
- ICLEI Emissions Management
- EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator

H. Recertification requirements

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

PE10 Action: Annual Progress Report

4 Points

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 greenhouse gas (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 Climate Smart Communities (CSC) task force. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments that issue a progress report that is consistent with the guidelines described here are eligible for four points.

F. What to submit

Submit a copy of the most recent progress report, released to the public within one year prior to the application date. The progress report must describe progress on implementation of the local climate action plan, if one exists, or implementation of another action-oriented plan that includes a substantial climate action component.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- New York, NY PlaNYC progress reports
- Portland, OR Climate Action Plan Progress Report (2010)

H. Recertification requirements

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

PE10 Action: Updates to Strategies & Plans

4 Points

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 ensures that it is a living document that charts the course for the local government's efforts toward reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

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. Refer to the guidelines below for structuring the 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 emission reduction 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 Climate Smart Communities (CSC) task force. Cross-department involvement and support are recommended.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Local governments that update plans and strategies in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines described here are eligible for four points.

F. What to submit

Submit a copy of the updated climate action plan or similar plan (or the appendix to the original plan with updated or new strategies). Provide evidence that the plan was publicly released. The update to the plan must have taken place within five years prior to the application date.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or best practices

- CSC Climate Action Planning Guide: This 28-page guide introduces the concepts behind climate action planning and provides a framework for developing a plan to reduce GHG emissions. It includes information on creating plans for government operations and for the community.
- Science Based Targets Initiative: This initiative provides guidance on setting GHG targets that are science-based, meaning they are aligned with the GHG reductions required to keep global temperature increase below 2°C compared to preindustrial temperatures. The initiative is focused on private companies but the methods are applicable to local governments who want detailed methods for setting science-based GHG targets.
- New York, NY Recent Reports and PlaNYC Progress Report

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.