

## PE9 Action: Climate Change Education & Engagement

4 Points

8 Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

### A. Why is this action important?

Public education, outreach, and engagement are critical to preparing communities for the effects of climate change and to enlist the public in taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as part of preventing further climate change. Engagement initiatives are often most effective when local governments partner with regional planning organizations and/or outreach specialists who can help them reach a wide range of community stakeholders. Outreach efforts provide opportunities to collaborate with nontraditional stakeholder groups, start conversations about the community's future, deepen a sense of identity and social cohesion, and identify innovative ways to reduce GHG emissions and build community resilience to climate change.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments can follow the guidelines below to develop and implement a community engagement program focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation. These guidelines are a starting point, and can be tailored to meet the needs of each community as appropriate.

1. Formally establish the program through a resolution, executive order, or memorandum of understanding. Outline goals, identify strategies to achieve those goals, and begin drafting a document that summarizes the local engagement program. Consider working with partners like regional planning organizations and outreach specialists to develop the scope and strategy. Some local governments may elect to incorporate content on climate change into existing engagement programs or plans, while others may treat it as a separate engagement opportunity. Early in the process, it may be useful to conduct focus groups, interviews, or surveys to gain a baseline understanding of the issues, perceptions, and beliefs about the causes and effects of a changing climate in the community.
2. To pilot engagement methods and build knowledge within the local government, conduct trainings to educate municipal 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 community environmental groups, business associations, public health officials, emergency responders, utilities, and other local leaders to initiate a dialogue on climate change in the community. Other potential partners include religious institutions, academia, neighborhood associations, professional societies, schools, and other membership associations. For example, local governments could work with existing public health community outreach and education initiatives and look for ways that climate-change considerations could be integrated into their efforts. Alternatively, if the local government is focused on reducing GHG emissions in the community, identifying and engaging with the largest emitters in the community to help them reduce emissions may be a priority.
4. Identify high-risk populations that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and start discussions on what they can take to prepare. Be flexible; it is likely that climate adaptation projects and priorities will emerge through dialogue with stakeholders, such as those in the agriculture sector, coastal businesses, mobility-restricted populations, and others.
5. Develop outreach materials and activities that describe the causes and effects of climate change in the community and how residents can work together to build a better future, in partnership with their local government. Use the values and priorities that have emerged through community dialogue to inform the design and content of the outreach materials and activities. Ensure that any written outreach materials are accessible for a wide-array of reading levels. Evaluate the languages spoken in the community and make the

materials available in the range of languages relevant to the community.

6. Coordinate with partners to facilitate engagement events, identify opportunities to share key information, and disseminate outreach materials. Work with community partners to select a range of locations and a range of times where participation is likely to be high and attract a wide range of stakeholders. Where possible, provide light refreshments and child care at events to encourage people to attend and share their perspective.
7. Develop a website as a centralized place 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 climate change. If a website already exists, be sure to update it with information about the outreach efforts and progress on achieving goals. For more information about developing a local government website about climate change, refer to the guidance under [PE9 Action: Local Climate Action Website](#).

To be eligible for points under this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action, the local government must provide a description of its community engagement strategy. The strategy document should include the goals and scope of the outreach program, key partners (in the community and in the region), an analysis of the audiences with which the local government is trying to engage, and recommended engagement methods tailored to local circumstances. The strategy and scope may evolve over time, but the local government should put these elements in writing as part of developing an ongoing engagement program. The engagement strategy may be incorporated into a larger plan (such as a community climate action plan) or it could be a standalone document, but to receive full credit for this CSC action, local governments must demonstrate that the strategy covers both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In addition, for CSC points, the local government implement at least two public education, outreach, and/or engagement activities focused on climate change within the past year. The local government must demonstrate engagement with a variety of community stakeholders through outreach activities such as public meetings, targeted stakeholder meetings, educational materials, and/or other approaches.

Local governments are encouraged to collaborate with other municipalities and regional organizations to develop a regional or multijurisdictional approach, but each local government must document how it has contributed to the outreach program in order to be eligible for points under this CSC action.

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

The timeframe and costs involved in the implementation this action depend largely on the scope of the program. The time commitment on the part of staff or elected officials who lead the effort may be substantial, but the direct costs may be modest, especially when collaborating with organizations and leveraging existing efforts.

### 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 CSC task force or the office that leads local climate efforts will most likely to be responsible for this action. Engagement activities may be led by the chief elected official's office, the city manager's office, or the department of the environment or planning. Inter-departmental involvement and support, especially with environmental educators, is recommended.

### E. How to obtain points for this action

Points for this action are tiered based on whether the focus of the education and engagement program is on reducing GHG emissions in the community (i.e., climate change mitigation) or on community adaptation to climate change.

	POSSIBLE POINTS
Engagement strategy/activities for climate change mitigation	4
Engagement strategy/activities for climate change adaptation	4

## F. What to submit

Provide a description of the local government's community engagement strategy that is consistent with the requirements described above. In addition, submit documentation of at least two public education, outreach, and/or engagement activities focused on climate change within the past year where the local government played a key role. Such documentation may include meeting minutes, attendee sign-in sheets, summaries of information gathered from the community, photographs of events, copies of educational materials, presentations, etc.

The applicant must demonstrate engagement with a variety of community stakeholders through outreach activities such as public meetings, targeted stakeholder meetings, educational materials, and/or other approaches. To receive full credit for this action, local governments must demonstrate that the community engagement program has covered both climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation.

Local governments are encouraged to provide any additional information that shows that the program is currently active, such as with any plans for future events or efforts.

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## G. Links to additional resources or examples

- [George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication](#)
- [Climate Stories Project](#): Climate Stories Project (CSP) is an educational and artistic forum for sharing stories about personal and community responses to climate change. CSP focuses on recording and sharing personal oral histories, which bring an immediacy to the sometimes abstract nature of climate change communication.
- [New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse](#)
- [DEC Climate Change Information Resources](#)
- [DOH Heat Vulnerability Index](#)
- [DOH Climate, Weather and Health](#)
- [DOT Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Initiative](#)
- [NYSERDA Responding to Climate Change in New York State \(ClimAID Report\)](#)
- [NOAA Climate.gov Teaching Climate](#)
- [Cornell University Climate Change, Youth Education](#)

## H. Recertification requirements

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



## PE9 Action: Energy Reduction Campaign

5 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

Energy reduction campaigns engage residents and businesses in creative ways to reduce their energy use and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Research shows that humans are more likely to participate in a program or activity if they are comparing themselves to peers, or they are being held accountable for their actions in some way. Energy reduction campaigns can range from energy awareness-based, personal accountability challenges (such as those that encourage residents or other stakeholder groups to pledge to reduce their energy use by taking small steps like walking to work, turning down the thermostat, buying locally-made/grown products, or replacing light bulbs with more efficient ones) to more structured, peer-to-peer energy reduction competitions with specific actions and reporting requirements (for example, where residents and/or businesses compete against their peers to see who can reduce the most energy through a variety of actions).

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments should create an energy reduction campaign that targets the sectors that use the most energy or have the most potential for emissions reductions. The campaign can be geared toward businesses, residents, institutions, or open to any type of participant within the community. Creating an energy campaign may involve the following steps:

1. Pass a local resolution or issue an executive order supporting and initiating the development of an energy reduction campaign.
2. Engage or create an advisory committee composed of key stakeholders (e.g., commercial property owners ought to serve on an advisory committee for a commercial office energy reduction campaign).
3. Research existing energy campaigns for the region, state, and country and identifying relevant best practices to use for the local campaign.
4. Develop the campaign with input from the community task force or other partners.
5. Determine the best mode of administering the campaign (e.g., creating a new webpage on the local government website or an entirely new brand and web presence for the campaign).
6. Create the campaign framework, goals, and materials that may include a checklist, an online tool, and guidance for participating in the campaign.
7. Solicit participation from the target audience to pilot the campaign.
8. Organize an official campaign launch hosted by the highest elected official. Consider scheduling the launch on a milestone date such as Earth Day or the anniversary of the release of the climate action plan.
9. Organize an educational presentation series for participants, to maintain involvement in the program and share best practices.

Alternatively, the local government can actively support or promote an existing energy campaign of another organization to its 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 campaign is based on the scale and scope of the campaign, and will likely take about one year. Project costs may include staff time, hiring third parties to develop the website and campaign tool, marketing materials, meeting materials (e.g., space, food, beverage, equipment), and awards. Resource needs may include equipment and a webpage or website to serve as the home of the campaign. For supporting another

organization's campaign, the project costs would involve staff time and potentially the development of marketing materials and/or the use of meeting spaces owned by the local government.

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

This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action is applicable to any local government. The CSC task force or the office that leads climate efforts will most likely be responsible for this action. These activities may also be 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**

Five points are available for creating an energy reduction campaign that was completed within one year prior to the application date or is currently active.

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

Submit one or more of the following materials, which must demonstrate that the energy campaign is either currently active or completed within one year prior to the application date:

- Campaign website address
- Guidance document
- Marketing materials
- Campaign progress reports with results

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#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [ICLEI Green Business Challenge](#)
- [Lowell, MA, Green Restaurant Program](#)
- [Virginia's 10% Challenge](#)
- [Chicago, IL, Green Office Challenge](#)
- Walk/Ride Day, Green Streets Initiative <http://gogreenstreets.org/>
- [Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Driving Demand for Home Energy](#) Improvements

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

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



## PE9 Action: Climate-related Public Events

3 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

Local governments cannot achieve energy and climate goals without the participation of an informed populace. The residential and commercial sectors are two large sources of greenhouse gas (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 the public will increase awareness of the benefits of individual action, and will help to further the community's climate action goals. This Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action offers a way for local governments to get experience with community education without developing a full engagement strategy, as is required for [PE9 Action: Climate Change Education and Engagement](#).

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments should collaborate with groups such as local nonprofits, academic institutions, trade associations, or companies to deliver educational seminars, workshops, conferences, fairs, or sessions at such events, to engage the public in the local government's clean 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.

Local governments are eligible for points under this CSC action by hosting a single event, or series of events related to climate change mitigation (reduction of GHG emissions) and/or climate change adaptation. The event must have been held within one year of prior to the application date. Types of events could include seminars, workshops, conferences, summits, or fairs. Local governments are eligible for points if they are the lead organizer or a supporting participant in an event organized by a partner organization. Support for a partner organization could be in form of donating the use of a local government facility, covering some of the costs of the event, serving on an advisory committee, speaking at the event, and/or using staff time to prepare for or facilitate the event(s).

### 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**

Three points are available for local governments that host or facilitate at least one community event in the last year that was related to climate change and was consistent with the guidelines above.

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

Submit documentation that includes the topic, date, time, location, subject, and partners for at least one event held within the past year that was related to climate change. Documentation may include the agenda, attendee sign-in sheets, photographs of the event, website post, and/or educational materials distributed at the event. Applicants must provide information on the role played by the local government.

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#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [Bedford 2020 Climate Action Summit](#)
- [Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, Education Materials & Activities](#)
- [Sustainable Communities Online, How to Plan a Sustainable Event](#)
- [Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit](#)
- [EPA Calendar of Climate Change and Water Events](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

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



## PE9 Action: Local Climate Action Website

3 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

Maintaining a website about the local government's climate initiatives is a convenient and low-cost way to deliver information to community members. Such a website is a place where the local government can describe its participation in the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program and other state programs that support clean energy and sustainability. 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.

### B. How to implement this action

Local governments should first consider their staff capacity to build and maintain the website; some may choose to hire a consultant who has the technical expertise to build the site. It is critical, however, that local government staff have the capacity to update the website with ease to keep it relevant and maintain its quality over time. The development of training materials, user guides, and web policies is recommended. For points under this CSC action, local governments must have updated their climate-related webpage(s) within the past year prior.

To implement this action, local governments must demonstrate that they have at least one webpage dedicated to local government and community efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change. At minimum, the webpage(s) must include the following components:

- A description of the local government's goals and projects related to local climate change mitigation and adaptation: This can include links to local reports and plans, such as GHG inventory reports, climate action plans, vulnerability assessments, and reports on progress made toward achieving GHG targets and other goals.
- Ways that residents and businesses in the community can participate in efforts led by the local government to reduce GHG emissions and build community resiliency to climate change
- A summary of actions that residents and businesses in the community can take to reduce their GHG emissions: This can include links to external resources that provide more information and describe the support available for actions related to, for example, energy efficiency, renewable energy, healthy vegetarian diets, and clean transportation options, such as electric vehicles.

Optional information or features to incorporate into the website include the following:

- Maps and information that describes local risk factors and areas vulnerable to climate hazards (and any related tracking of indicators)
- Descriptions of sponsors and partners involved in local climate action
- Calendar of events related to climate change (hosted by the local government or its partners)
- Webpage or form for people to enter feedback and ideas
- Tools to help users find resources and contacts, such as tool kits, indices, and/or search functions
- Local, state, national, and international resources and links related to climate change

### 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, 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**

Three points are available for applicants who create a website that meets the minimum requirements described above.

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

Submit a link to at least one webpage that contains the three minimum components: 1) a description of the local government's efforts related to local climate change mitigation and adaptation, 2) how local residents and businesses can participate in those efforts, and 3) a summary of actions that residents and businesses in the community can take to reduce their GHG emissions. These components can be on separate webpages.

In addition, provide a description of new content that was posted to the website within the past year. If available, also submit any staff training materials, user guides, and/or web policies.

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#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [Ulster County, NY, Department of the Environment, Sustainability & Energy Webpage](#)
- [Town of Lake George, NY, Green Initiatives](#)
- [Albany, NY, Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability](#)
- [New Rochelle, NY, Sustainability Webpage](#)
- [New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

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



## PE9 Action: Social Media

3 Points

### 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 best framework for 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 considered?
- 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.

Points for this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action are available to local governments that create at least one social media account (such as a Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or Tumblr) and use it to inform the community about local government efforts and engage the community in accomplishing the climate-related actions led by the local government has committed. Applicants must show that new content has been posted within one year prior to the application date.

### 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**

Three points are available for completing this action in a manner consistent with the requirements described here.

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

Submit the website address of at least one social media account managed by the local government. Demonstrate how the accounts have been used to support clean 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.

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#### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

- [Dobbs Ferry, NY, Renew Dobbs Ferry Facebook Page](#)
- [Bedford, NY, Energize Bedford Facebook Page](#)
- [Albany, NY, Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability Facebook Page](#)
- [Albany, NY Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability Twitter Account](#)

#### **H. Recertification requirements**

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