

Climate Action Plan

In a Nutshell

A Climate Action Plan identifies the strategies an organization plans to implement to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. While the instructions in this BMP are tailored to local governments, any organization (including businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and universities) can complete a Climate Action Plan.

The “How To”

A Climate Action Plan details a strategy to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG), for a municipality. The EPA has a [guide](#) for developing a climate action plan. In the St. Louis area, the [Regional Environmental Internship Program](#) has assisted several municipalities complete GHG inventories and Climate Action Plans. This program assists communities all the way up to the implementation phase of the program. Program participants are aided while they assess the situation and devise a plan. Community input is a key component to a climate action plan, and the Regional Environmental Internship Program will facilitate that discussion.

Municipal Climate Action Plans, typically addresses two categories: emissions associated with the community as a whole, and the emissions associated with activities under the local government's control.

Climate Action Plans are most successful when communities have input in their development. Community meetings and the input of a citizen-led sustainability commission help ensure local priorities as any such plan is developed.

The City of Alton completed a [Climate Action Plan](#) in May 2011. The city of St. Louis completed a [2010 baseline inventory of carbon emissions](#), which will enable the city to measure progress in reducing carbon emissions as a part of the city's Sustainability Plan.

Planning & Zoning

In the St. Louis area, several cities ([Richmond Heights](#) and [Wildwood](#)) have worked in partnership with St. Louis University and the [US Green Building Council](#) to conduct a Green House Gas Inventory with the help of a student intern. Conducting a GHG inventory in partnership with the [St. Louis Regional Environmental Internship Program](#) requires passage of a formal resolution authorizing participation in the REIP, hiring of the intern, membership in ICLEI, and completion of the GHG inventory. ICLEI-USA's website has a [plethora of information](#) including guidebooks and various other tools. Mayors should, with the endorsement of the city council, sign the [U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement](#).

Dollars & Cents

Climate Action Plans typically explore opportunities for conserving fossil fuels, used in heating, lighting, and city fleets. Some city plans include strategies for reducing carbon emissions of businesses, industry and residents within the city in addition to the strategies for reduction of direct municipal use.

Energy efficiency strategies have the potential to reduce utility and fuel costs, saving the city and taxpayers significant amounts of money. Often there is an up-front cost associated with improving energy efficiency, and a plan can help city officials assess costs and benefits, and develop a priority for action.

The exact amount of cost saving varies, but opportunities for significant savings can be found. The cost to develop a plan is generally minimal compared to the savings which can be achieved. of allowing climate change to occur unabated.

Measuring Success

Ongoing measurement of GHG emissions and evaluation of the community's progress toward established GHG emissions reduction targets is necessary to understand the success of the Climate Action planning process. Ideally, the municipality will complete a Climate Action Plan, implement the strategies included in the plan, and realize the associated emissions savings.

The ultimate goal of a Climate Action Plan is to make the public aware of the dangers of carbon pollution. This awareness should then spur the public to support municipal action to to reduce carbon pollution by improving energy efficiencies within municipal operation. An inventory of greenhouse gas emissions will enable municipal officials to measure progress toward reducing carbon emissions.

A OneSTL Performance Indicator measures Greenhouse Gas emission levels per capita for the region.. The desired trend for this indicator is downward.

Discover More

Public input during the creation of a Climate Action Plan, typically through a community's Sustainability Commission or Green Team, ensures that the community is engaged in the planning process.

The U.S. E.P.A. has recommendations for local climate and energy programs located [here](#).

Case Studies

Climate Action Task Force

Contact

John May
Chair, Climate Action Task Force
314-863-4922
mayway801@gmail.com

Description

The City of Creve Coeur appointed a Climate Action Task Force consisting of elected and appointed officials and city staff. The CATF was charged with developing a greenhouse gas reduction target and climate action

plan, and reporting both to the city council for formal action. The CATF met monthly, consulted with community resources, considered many possible strategies, and developed a target and a three-phase climate action plan. The first phase was recommended to the city council, and was formally adopted. The CATF continued meeting, and assisted the city to

Cost

The major cost involved the time given to the CATF by the principal staff person involved, which was not documented. Implementation of each specific strategy recommended in the plan would generate a savings or a cost, which should be individually considered before inclusion in the plan. The cost to develop a plan should be considered against the anticipated cost of allowing climate change to occur unabated.

Lessons Learned

Many opportunities to reduce GHG emissions by reducing energy consumption existed. Political commitment is essential: once the political commitment was in place, staff members became involved. The process of developing the plan required the CATF to educate itself, and that education percolated informally through the government. Pursuing the "low hanging fruit" first was an essential element of the plan's success. Cost effective opportunities to reduce energy consumption that were not envisioned in the plan presented themselves from time-to-time, and the flexibility to pursue them was essential.