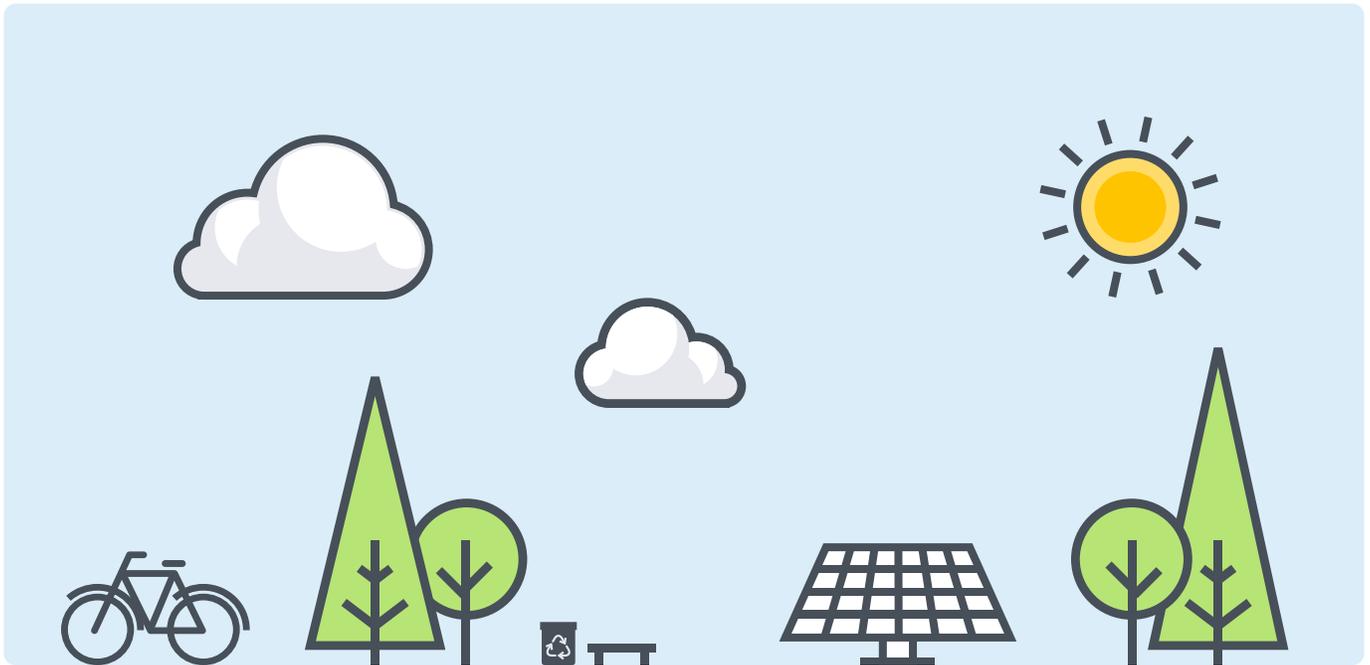




Creating a Climate Action Plan

**A Step-by-Step Guide
to Getting It Right**





What is a Climate Action Plan?

If you're reading this, it's probably because you're about to start the process of creating your Climate Action Plan. Great! This guide is an important first step.

A **Climate Action Plan** is the strategic roadmap that a municipality or large organization commits to in order to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and related climatic impacts. While some cities, counties, states and public entities are required to create a climate action plan, others are doing it proactively to help build greater climate resilience.

Creating a Climate Action Plan that you can successfully implement and generate community support around happens off the page, through a well-facilitated collaborative process.



Process of the Climate Action Plan

Creating a Climate Action Plan is a multidimensional process that includes in-depth research, detailed analysis, community involvement and education, and a solid, time-tested process. The final plan details a roadmap for climate success, while the process of creating the plan sets the stage for effective real-world implementation. The process unfolds over the following three steps.



1

Discovery

The first step in the process is to lay the groundwork for success by reviewing previous sustainability and climate work, benchmarking with peer municipalities or organizations, developing a solid baseline and tightening the project plan.



Greenhouse Gas Assessment

Conduct or update your greenhouse gas inventory. The assessment provides an important foundation upon which many decisions will be based, so accuracy and thoroughness are imperative.



Vulnerability Assessment

Identifying the specific climate and non-climate risks the community will face because of climate change.



Develop a Community Engagement Plan

Identify key stakeholders, determine your communication vehicles and processes, establish a shared online engagement hub. The plan needs to be equitable and have strategies for including community members who have traditionally been underrepresented.

2

Community Roadmapping

Your community engagement efforts should span the majority of the project plan. There will be a consistent foundation of opportunities for any member of the public to engage, and there will also be peaks of activity when key stakeholders and a Climate Action Plan task force meets. These engagement activities are critical to creating a plan that the community truly owns, which is a key to long-term success.

Several months of work will be needed to develop your Climate Action Plan. This largest phase is a constant dance as you manage myriad stakeholders, build consensus toward a community vision and goals, assess your climate vulnerabilities and identify, vet, refine and prioritize the strategies that will lead you to your goals. Buckle up...it's a fun ride!



Visioning

As a team, an important early step is to articulate a clear and practical vision of what your climate resilient municipality or organization of the future would be like.



Barrier Identification

What is holding the community back from achieving its vision?



Goal Setting & Strategy Development

Every community should set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals. This phase is also where you develop your specific strategies to address the indentifies risks and achieve the vision. These strategies are grounded in greenhouse gas forecasts and planning, which help to ensure you know which strategies will have the biggest impact.

3

Craft Climate Action Plan

With much of the heavy lifting done, the team crafts the plan and develops all the tools and resources needed to implement the plan.



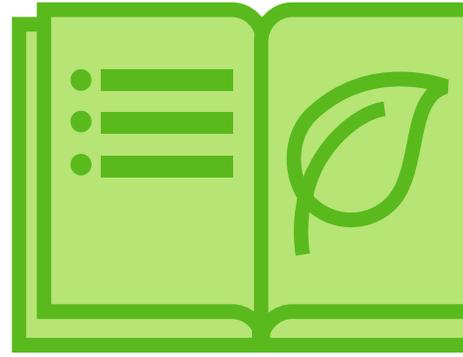
Write, Refine & Finalize

It's time to get busy writing. The team will write the plan, release a draft, gather public input, and finalize.



Implementation Toolkit

Commit to concrete plans for accountability, collaboration, implementation and action.
Roll out an online dashboard to track progress toward goals.



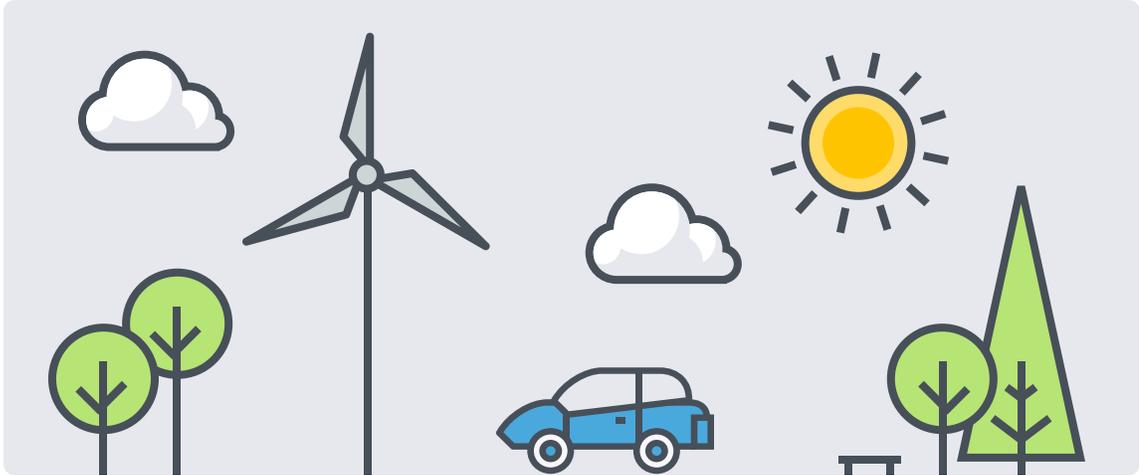
Structure of a Climate Action Plan

There are multiple ways to craft your Climate Action Plan, but at the very least, your plan should include these five sections:

- 1 Community Vision for the Future**
- 2 Climate Vulnerability Assessment**
- 3 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Assessment and Targets**
- 4 Actions to Reduce Emissions and Build Resilience**
- 5 Implementation Toolkit**

1 Community Vision for the Future

Always start with the end in mind. Your community's vision for the future will set the stage for its climate goals and the strategies you will pursue in the years to come.



2 Climate Vulnerability Assessment

Pulling together climate data for your area, take a look at the ways your municipality or organization will be impacted. What are your citizens and workforces going to be facing in 10 years? 20 years? 50 years? How will climate change impact the land and water? Economic and social conditions? The makeup of the population? What new needs will climate change create? What hazards will be created or exacerbated in the community from extreme weather events? What domino effects might then occur from those events?

Projecting the future impacts of climate change and how they'll directly impact your community is an eye-opening experience for most members on the Climate Action Plan team. It's also an important step for generating plan buy-in and starting to nail down key areas of priority that will guide the prioritized actions.



3

Greenhouse Gas Assessment and Targets

Before you can set GHG reduction targets, it's critical to have an accurate, comprehensive inventory of your current emissions. Your GHG emissions inventory will catalog all sources of GHG within the municipality or organizations. The assessment is a valuable tool to inform the actions that are most critical for your Climate Action Plan, and which actions may not be a priority for your community.

Determining your GHG emissions can be a complex process that is best handled by an experienced partner. GHG sources for municipalities to inventory must include these basics, and determining how to continue tracking these over time can be quite complex:

- Fuel combustion and electricity use in facilities (including public buildings, wastewater treatment plants, water pumping stations, and others)
- Electricity use for streetlights, traffic signals, and other public lighting
- Mobile fuel combustion in vehicle and transit fleets
- Solid waste facilities
- Wastewater treatment facilities

Other organizations may inventory GHG sources like:



Purchased Goods and Services



Electrical Power Distribution



Waste Generation



Employee Commutes



Employee Business Travel



Fugitive Refrigerants

Armed with your GHG inventory and your projected climate impacts, the next step in creating your Climate Action Plan is to clearly lay out realistic goals for your GHG emissions. What are the far-reaching benefits to these reductions to everyone in the community—economic, social, and health?

4 Actions to Reduce Emissions and Build Resilience

This is the “plan” part of the plan. Here, you’ll work through the actions that need to be taken to change that projected picture of the future. Based on your GHG inventory and vulnerability assessment, what are the most impactful actions that can be taken? Where are the quick wins? Which actions will garner the most community support?

There are multiple considerations and analyses that will go into developing your prioritized action list. But knowing where most of your GHG emissions are coming from and which projected strategies are most critical to mitigate emissions will guide much of your decision making.

You’ll also work through which actions are prerequisites to other actions. Prioritizing those foundational actions higher up the list may help you reach your goals more efficiently. On the other hand, if the community is looking for signs of progress, you may prioritize items that are easier to implement in the name of creating early buy-in, leading to greater momentum.

5 Implementation Toolkit

Now you’re onto the fun part: implementation. But you need to pull all the right tools together to ensure the community is well-equipped to be successful. One of the most important tools is a dashboard that tracks and effectively communicates your progress. Because the purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to decrease your GHG emissions, a critical part of the plan is how to track those numbers to ensure they’re heading in the right direction. The toolkit should include, among other things, a customized dashboard that monitors all the critical metrics of a Climate Action Plan and makes them public so everyone in the community can have a transparent view into the plan’s progress.

Beyond GHG emissions, many entities find that there are other important metrics to track as part of their journey to their target numbers. Water usage, Energy Star rating, materials diversion rate, sustainability engagement score, and increase in green transportation are examples. Deciding which measures are most critical for your plan’s goals and developing a plan to track them is a requirement for a comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

Finally, establish, communicate, and start using your concrete plans for accountability, collaboration, implementation and action.

Let's build out your Climate Action Plan

**There's a lot to a Climate Action Plan.
And you can't do it alone.**

**At Verdis Group, we help organizations identify
and implement sustainable solutions, including
creating and implementing Climate Action Plans.**

**If creating a Climate Action Plan is on your
sustainability roadmap, let's have a conversation.
Set up time to discuss your next steps now.**

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

