



**Path to Positive  
Utah**  
Local Climate Leadership

**Declaration**

Utah is a pioneering state — strong, capable and innovative — with a firm connection to our values. As visionary leaders in business, government, higher education, faith and community organizations, we take shared responsibility for protecting our economy, air quality and environment. This includes climate change and its impact on our economic well-being, quality of life and quality of life. We will inspire our communities and smart growth to address climate change and lead others by demonstration of our commitment and leadership.

**Launched this**

*[Faded text, likely listing dates and locations of the declaration's launch]*

# MOVING FORWARD

A Guide to Building Momentum on Climate Solutions in Your Community



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter	3
What You Need to Know	4
What You Need to Do	6
Mitigation: Steps & Resources	8
Resilience: Steps & Resources	12
Community Engagement	16
Engagement: Leadership	19
Engagement: Steps & Resources	21

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Urban Sustainability Directors Network  
Institute for Sustainable Communities  
Utah Clean Energy  
Climate Resolve  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

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Cover: Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski at the Path to Positive Utah launch.  
Photo Courtesy of Love Communications

## WELCOME CIVIC LEADERS

No one ever ran for city council, county commissioner, or mayor to solve climate change, but its challenges are now present in our communities — along with opportunities to solve them. Where do you start? This guide can help you decide the best way for your own community.

Meaningful local climate solutions are within reach. This guide is for civic leaders in small or mid-size communities who want to lead on climate and sustainability but may lack full time sustainability staff, or who may have never focused on climate before. It will provide you with the ideas and resources to act. By embedding local solutions in your planning and management activities, you can achieve financial benefits with little or no incremental costs. Reinvesting savings in additional climate action steps can help build the momentum further. Addressing climate change at the local level provides many benefits, including:

- **Creating healthier communities for all residents**
- **Protecting vulnerable residents and communities**
- **Saving money by cutting waste and promoting local renewables**
- **Spurring economic vitality and business investments**
- **Building property values and improving public safety by reducing climate risks**
- **Restoring natural assets that can protect from climate impacts**

ecoAmerica has teamed up with our national partners, who have signed on here, to provide you with these resources, including guidance on how to best engage your residents using clear, positive, inclusive and relevant messages.

This is just the start. Sign up for the monthly newsletter and blog at [PathToPositive.org](http://PathToPositive.org) to get fresh ideas and resources regularly, including webinars and more detailed guides. And please share your thoughts and ideas with any of us so we can improve these resources.

Sincerely,



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# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



**One exhibit from the Evanston, IL program, “Experience Climate Change,” an initiative that educates residents on how climate impacts will affect them, and helps city officials gather input on decision making.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Evanston

Despite lingering disagreement about the causes of climate change, cities and towns across America are feeling its effects. That is why thousands of local leaders have already started working on energy efficiency, renewable energy, improved transportation systems, and waste reduction. They are also working to prepare their communities. Through local climate and sustainability action, cities and towns are creating jobs, adding transportation options, and spurring green energy investments that cut utility bills, provide energy choices, and increase livability. These actions give healthy and resilient communities a competitive edge in attracting businesses, residents, and workers.

Chances are, your community can already boast about having made some of these positive changes, but more are needed. For solutions to scale up, local leaders also need the active support and participation of residents and stakeholders. Here are some key factors to consider as you read through this Moving Forward Guide and think about your own community.

**Climate Change and Communities:** Local leaders are at the forefront of solving problems in their communities — and climate change is no different. Protecting citizen health and safety and building robust communities is a top priority. Local leaders cannot wait for Washington to take action. Beneficial solutions are within reach, so local leaders can act today to boost economic prosperity, improve sustainability and resilience, and move to energy independence.

**Climate Justice and Just Transition:** Climate change is a social and ethical issue. The people who can least afford it — the underserved, communities of color, low-income communities, the elderly, the ill, workers, our children and future generations — bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change including air and water pollution, flooding and wildfires, and extreme weather disasters. And as the trend towards sustainable practices accelerates, economic practices that support workers’ security and livelihoods are needed to ensure that the benefits of sustainable economies are shared broadly throughout your community.

**The Politics of Climate Change:** More and more local leaders are concluding that the risks and impacts of climate change transcend politics, and that the vast majority of their citizens are concerned. 80% of Americans believe climate change is happening, and three quarters

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of Americans believe that we need to take action now to reduce the pollution that is causing climate change. The solutions and the opportunities that you can create for local businesses, economies, and residents are also bipartisan. There is always a place for debate on specific policies and programs, but the costs of inaction are becoming too dire for local leaders to ignore.

**Climate Mitigation for Cleaner Communities:** By reducing fossil fuel use, local governments will save money, cut pollution, and promote healthier communities. Key steps include energy efficiency, renewable power, cleaner local transportation, waste reduction, sustainable purchasing policies, and restoring the local environment.

**Climate Resilience and Restoration for Safer Communities:**

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the frequency and severity of weather-related disasters in every region of America. Mounting evidence indicates that changes to our climate are exacerbating these disasters, bringing new threats to community health and safety. Local leaders are expected to anticipate risks to their communities and put policies and programs in place to reduce those risks.

**Local Leadership for Engaged Communities:** Local governments account for just a fraction of their community's total energy use, transportation, purchasing, and waste. Government actions are critical but leaders must also build community support and engagement to get the work done. Leaders should incorporate positive messages and guidance about how progress toward energy and climate solutions makes communities more sustainable, prosperous, healthy, resilient, and safe.

*Leaders can support and extend local efforts by incorporating positive messages about how progress toward energy and climate solutions makes communities more sustainable, prosperous, healthy, resilient, and safe.*



# WHAT YOU NEED TO DO



**A display at Climate Day LA shows off container products that are an alternative to plastics and are plant based.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Los Angeles

As a local elected leader, your job is to solve local problems. As climate change impacts are felt in every city and town, leadership begins by engaging your local residents, making a visible commitment, advancing solutions, and strengthening your community. The keys to success are executive leadership, an informed and motivated staff, consistent support, and participation from community leaders and institutions.

**Make a visible commitment to a low carbon and resilient future:** Inspire change by making a public commitment that signals members in your community to get involved. Your declaration on local solutions — featured on your website, social media, and in public comments — will inspire others to support your efforts. Focus on the benefits and cost savings that people in your community will realize with the shift to positive solutions like clean energy and greater efficiency, and how investing today will make your community stronger tomorrow. Sample declarations are included in this toolkit. You can join thousands of leaders across America who have pledged to move towards 100% clean renewable energy through several existing programs, including We Are Still In, Climate Mayors, or Sierra Club Mayors for 100% Clean Energy.

**Take Stock and Aim for Quick Successes:** Local communities have taken thousands of concrete steps to reduce energy use and waste, promote conservation and savings, and provide healthier air and water. Take stock of what you are already doing, catalog your options for action, and increase your momentum with easily achievable and affordable steps that can be put in place quickly. Borrow successful ideas from other communities and seek out policy and program ideas from the resources included in this guide.

**Establish Priorities and Make Informed Plans:** A good plan need not be complicated or difficult. For smaller communities without the staffing and resources to develop a complex plan, a “getting started” effort as described in this guide is an effective way to motivate progress by revealing current solutions and setting specific goals and priorities. Take steps to make sustainability and resiliency core missions of your government. Identify and assign staff across agencies and departments to lead climate and resiliency work, and facilitate communication among them.

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**Engage Your Community:** Leaders in important sectors like business, higher education, health care, and faith are already making commitments to lead towards climate solutions. Local government can leverage this growing awareness and action by working with them to broaden and deepen the call to action by engaging their congregants, clients, customers, patients, members, and employees in supporting solutions.

**Embed Solutions and Recycle the Savings:** Climate and sustainability solutions should be embedded into the ongoing business of local governance — not as a separate project. Initial savings from reducing energy and water use, sustainable purchasing and waste can be used to support next steps. Set up a revolving fund to track savings and strategically reinvest them in additional efficiencies. Prioritizing efficiency and waste reduction will help sustainability efforts and engage your staff in achieving solutions.

**Build from Success, and Keep Going:** Climate impacts and solutions will continue to unfold over time, so think of these steps as a long-term investment in your community. As new technologies, policies, and opportunities arise, fit them into your community as you are able. A good climate solutions plan will be adjustable, scalable, and easy to improve upon in order to take advantage of new needs and opportunities. You are now well on your way to building a local, well supported plan to a cleaner, resilient and sustainable future!

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# MITIGATION: STEPS AND RESOURCES



**Mayor Jackie Biskupski (left) shows off one of Salt Lake City's new EV charging stations.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Salt Lake City

Government facilities and operations contribute only a small share of a community's pollution. Because the majority comes from non-governmental sectors (homes, businesses, churches, schools, hospitals, etc.), sustainable climate solutions require government leadership that activates broad community participation.

**Don't Let Measurement Hold Back Action:** Many communities measure their energy use, transportation systems, waste, and other sources of greenhouse gas emissions to establish a baseline against which to set goals and measure reductions. While detailed measurement is important, it is not a required first step. Don't hesitate to implement solutions — conserve energy and water, use renewable energy, provide transportation options, reduce waste, and institute sustainable purchasing practices — right away. The sooner you start, the sooner your community benefits.

**Remember, It's for Your Community:** Every community faces unique challenges and opportunities. Hundreds of sustainability solutions are available and virtually every community is already applying them at some level or scale. A useful first step for local leaders is to identify policies, programs, and practices that are already in place and evaluate whether they can be improved or scaled-up. These solutions can inspire actions that save money, improve health, and strengthen communities now. Here are the broad categories of local solutions:

**Be Wise About Saving Energy:** Local leaders can achieve cost-saving conservation goals by reducing energy use. Efficiency in buildings and vehicle fleets will gain the most savings.

- Save energy through facilities energy systems commissioning, weatherization, shading, lighting, appliances, and HVAC and water heating equipment upgrades
- Promote workforce financing and training for weatherization efforts, especially for low-income residents
- Adopt green building standards that improve building design and efficiency for new construction and renovations
- Replace fossil fuel cars and buses with hybrid or electric vehicles



### **Purchase or Produce Local Renewable Energy:**

As major buyers of electricity and as opinion leaders, local governments can help nudge utilities towards a more renewable mix of power. Adding renewable energy to the grid is the most significant improvement communities can make to solving climate pollution issues.

- Set goals for purchasing green power from renewable sources — get to 100%
- Recruit leaders in surrounding communities to leverage green purchasing power
- Work with local utilities to make green power widely available to all
- Install solar or wind generation on local facilities and properties with high visibility

**Savings Start at Home (and at Work):** The U.S. Green Building Council estimates that 39% of climate emissions come from building energy use, mostly for heating and cooling. Greening the energy used in local homes and businesses can achieve dramatic cuts in climate pollution.

- Offer businesses and homeowners energy audits, free LED light bulbs, and appliance rebates
- Provide efficiency incentives and challenges to local businesses and homeowners

Most communities need more affordable housing. Invest in housing that saves energy and costs less for occupants through efficient construction, lighting, and appliances, and by building new units in dense neighborhoods near public transportation and vital services.

- Provide energy efficiency incentives to housing developers and operators
- Strengthen building codes for affordable housing
- Seek funding to retrofit affordable housing units
- Develop a plan for “location efficiency” of affordable housing

*Don't hesitate to implement solutions — conserve energy and water, use renewable energy, provide transportation options, reduce waste, and institute sustainable purchasing practices right away. The sooner you start, the sooner your community benefits.*



**A display by the LA County Bike Coalition during Climate Day LA touts the benefits of bicycle commuting as emission free transportation.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Los Angeles

**Reroute Transportation Opportunities:** Advances in community design, transportation technology, and shared and active transportation options are improving local transit. Reducing petroleum use and adding active transportation cuts pollution and makes communities healthier.

- Employ Complete Streets design policies
- Promote active transportation modes such as walking and biking
- Prioritize and invest in public transit options, including electric buses
- Add car sharing, bike sharing, and autonomous vehicle systems
- Promote development near transit systems, including affordable housing
- Add electric vehicle charging facilities in public spaces

**Waste Is Waste:** Reducing waste throughout the supply chain will result in cost and energy savings and will reduce impacts from the disposal of materials.

- Cut waste through packaging reduction, reuse and recycling, and composting within municipal operations, local businesses, and households
- Promote double sided copying, reusable water bottles, and recyclable materials
- Publish newsletters, bulletins, and guides online

**Smart Purchasing Is Right on the Money:** We can do more — and better — with the money we spend. Government purchasing power can leverage best practices that cut pollution, waste, and the use of toxic materials, and promote sustainability while saving money.

- Institute Environmentally Preferable Purchasing policies in government contracts
- Include green purchasing requirements for suppliers and contractors, like reusable or recyclable packaging, less toxic cleaning and office supplies, and efficient electronics and appliances
- Elevate suppliers' and contractors' sustainability commitments and practices

**Embed Solutions and Re-Invest Savings:** Track the cost savings from reducing energy use and waste, and re-invest them in energy efficiency and other sustainability programs.

- Prioritize efficiency, waste reduction, and cost savings government-wide with a goal to reinforce the role all staff play in achieving these solutions
- Provide recognition, awards, competitions, or other incentives for innovative employee ideas for reducing waste and improving sustainable practices
- Calculate fuel and maintenance savings over the life of city buses and vehicles to support replacing fleets with electric vehicles

***Sustainable climate solutions require government leadership that activates broad community participation.***

## SELECTED MITIGATION RESOURCES

**The Climate Registry: Local Governments Operation Protocol:**

Generate data to set greenhouse gas targets to reduce emissions, save money, and report progress

**EPA: How to Conduct a Greenhouse Gas Inventory:** This tool is designed for governments interested in compiling a relatively quick and simple GHG inventory.

**EPA: EnergyStar Portfolio Manager:** Shows how to monitor energy efficiency and reduction for a range of buildings and facilities.

**Urban Sustainability Directors Network: Sustainable Consumption Toolkit:**

Showcases how to fit sustainable consumption and where communities can take action on food, housing, and purchasing.

**The World Bank: CURB Tool - Climate Action for Urban Sustainability:**

Designed to help cities take action on climate by allowing them to map and measure different action plans.

**Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council:** — Supporting and

recognizing purchasing leadership that accelerates the transition to a prosperous and sustainable future.

**U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance: Go Green Program:** Helps cities identify and purchase certified green products.

**NLC Sustainable Cities Institute** provides convening opportunities, technical assistance and leadership training for cities to mitigate and adapt to the effects of a changing climate. SCI helps cities implement proven strategies.

# RESILIENCE: STEPS & RESOURCES



**Officials from the Municipality of Anchorage meet with community members, non-profit leaders, and state emergency managers at City Hall for a workshop on emergency preparedness.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Anchorage

In more and more communities, what were once potential risks of climate change are becoming real — with damaging consequences. Communities need to move beyond discussions about blame and seek solutions that will improve local safety, health, and property. It's time — our changing climate is impacting people, businesses, and our communities.

**Primary Risks and Threats:** Resilience is the ability to predict, prepare for, and recover from climate impacts when they happen. Climate risks and resilience are different for each community, so local leaders must assess and plan around their unique risk profile. Cities need to mitigate the pollution that is damaging our climate, while also building resilience by preparing for the anticipated risks and impacts. There are three primary risk and impact phenomena:

1. Flooding from sea level rise and intense and frequent precipitation
2. Weather variability and extremes, including wind, precipitation and drought
3. Temperature extremes such as intense and/or prolonged heat and cold

**Who Bears the Brunt:** These major climate risk phenomena affect local cities and towns across three primary community systems, resulting in impacts such as those sampled below:

- **People and Communities:** Impacts to health and safety; social and psychological harm and disruption; economic or job instability; dislocation and social disruption, especially for vulnerable and frontline communities
- **Built Systems:** Damage to public and private property and buildings; damage to and disruption of public energy, water, sanitary, communications, and transportation infrastructure
- **Natural Systems:** Reduction in air and water quality and availability; loss of food security; species migration; damage to local green spaces, trees and animals; variation and increase in vector-borne diseases and invasive species

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**Key Considerations for Planning and Action:** Evaluation and planning are critical to local preparations for anticipated climate risks. Develop a clear understanding of potential risks and how to minimize them to better engage your community. The checklist below draws from NOAA's U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit and guiding principles from The White House Council on Environmental Quality:

*Climate risks and resilience are different for each community, so local leaders must assess and plan around their unique risk profile.*

**Assess Local Hazards, Vulnerabilities, and Risks:**

- Assess likely local impacts using historical records and climate models
- Evaluate the location of critical safety, energy, water, transportation and communications infrastructure
- Apply risk-management methods, tools, and resources to identify options that limit vulnerability and build resilience

**Investigate Options, Prioritize, Plan and Revise:**

- Assess efficacy, costs, and benefits of risk mitigation and best practices
- Implement plans that prioritize short, medium, and long-term actions
- Incorporate plans into core policies and programs across all departments of local government, and ask local institutions to do the same
- Evaluate performance and revise plans accordingly

**Take Action Through Strong Partnerships:**

- Prioritize helping people, places, and infrastructure that are most vulnerable, especially front-line communities and the leaders and institutions that serve them
- Garner diverse community and institutional support for plan implementation
- Coordinate plans across multiple sectors
- Refresh plans through regular communications and response integration





**Evanston citizens learn about the city's increasing number of days of extreme heat and discuss ways to prepare for them with Sustainability Officer Kumar Jensen.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Evanston

### Maximize Mutual and Ecosystem-Based Benefits

- Adopt measures supporting energy, climate and sustainability goals
- Integrate goals for preparedness, resource management, and costs savings
- Improve ecosystem resilience, and protect critical ecosystem services to reduce human and natural vulnerabilities and promote restoration

### 6 Ways to Prepare People and Restore Communities

Assessing your community's risks and the range of available solutions will provide you with the framework for taking action. Every community will require measures that protect and restore people, places, and nature. Here are some ideas that apply to all communities:

1. **Start with People:** Assess anticipated climate impacts in your community based on vulnerability levels. Prepare at-risk communities (elderly, youth, underserved, communities of color, and those who are exposed to natural threats) and increase their resiliency. Provide dedicated communications and resources to these affected communities. Include people in the affected communities in decision-making and implementation *early* in the process.
2. **Anticipate the Range of Human Impacts:** Climate damage and disruption can have a broad range of human impacts: loss of property and security; reduced mobility; loss of energy, water, and communications services; loss of jobs and resources; illness, injury, social disruption; and psychological stress and anxiety. Build awareness of the risks and likely impacts and prepare your community to address them — both proactively and in response to climate events.
3. **Prepare Comprehensively:** Embed climate impacts throughout emergency plans and preparation activities including a broad community-wide emergency notification system. Prepare for severe weather and climate refugees, and join a regional resiliency task force. Promote community preparedness through businesses, schools, health care providers, and churches. Identify and activate shelters in extreme weather events. Urge municipal employees and concerned residents to enroll in emergency preparedness and response training.

4. **Make Nature Your Ally:** Green infrastructure can temper weather extremes.
  - Plant climate-resistant shade trees that are resilient in severe weather.
  - Install flood tolerant plants in rain gardens and bioswales to capture stormwater.
  - Use berms, swales and natural barriers to control water.
  - Limit construction in low-lying areas or wetlands, and consider a buy-out program for frequently flooded property.
5. **Plan and Build with Impacts in Mind:** Assess the vulnerability of critical infrastructure, design for resiliency, and implement zoning and building requirements that account for weather-related risks like wind, water, and heat. Reduce energy and water use and waste. Limit impervious surface area to allow for the absorption of storm water. Consider set-backs to avoid building in flood zones. Elevate critical building systems that are vulnerable to high water events.
6. **Beat the Heat:** Institute a long-term tree canopy care and restoration plan. Create green, solar, and cool roof programs to mitigate urban heat. Provide shade structures in urban heat islands. Activate cooling centers in public buildings during extreme heat. Provide free public transportation on “bad air” or extreme heat days.

*According to AAAS, natural adaption can reduce 21% of the GHG emissions in the US. A healthy natural environment mitigates pollution, absorbs carbon, increases livability and property values, provides storm defenses, saves energy, and increases resiliency that artificial systems cannot match — and for less money.*

## SELECTED RESILIENCE RESOURCES

### U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit:

Tools to help manage climate-related risks and opportunities, and guide in building resilience to extreme events.

**National Institute of Standards and Technology: Community Resilience:** 200 tools to help you take steps to build resilience.

**CAKE: Climate Resilience Toolkit:** Provides a practical, flexible approach to help communities improve resilience by setting priorities to manage risks.

### The Nature Conservancy:

#### Community Resilience Building

— A community-driven process to identify top hazards and improve community resilience to all hazards today and in the future.

### Georgetown Climate Center:

Adaptation Clearinghouse: A database and networking site that serves policymakers and others who are working to help communities adapt to climate change.

### Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaption (ARCCA):

Tools for developing adaptation policy, forming regional collaboratives, ICARP clearinghouse, Cal-Adapt, and other maps of risks.

### Notre Dame's Urban Adaptation

Assessment includes data from over 270 US cities with information on risks and vulnerabilities, adaptive capacities and distribution.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



**Salt Lake City's sustainability team presents "Breakthrough Dialogue on Climate Action" at the 2019 UN Civil Society Conference on Sustainable Cities and Communities.**

Photo Courtesy: Jennifer Roberts

Effective climate and sustainability solutions depend on robust and purposeful engagement of leaders throughout the community. Public engagement builds awareness and support for solutions across the private sector and can help spur private actions that serve everyone.

## Why Engage the Community?

Public awareness and participation makes for good local public policy. Engaging the entire community on climate solutions magnifies local government action and helps citizens feel vested in the outcomes. Citizen and stakeholder participation in developing sustainable policies can be a rewarding process that leads to gains in the design, participation, and outcomes of local programs. Good engagement is both a process and an outcome — a journey and a destination.

## Who Is Engaging Their Communities?

Leadership on climate solutions is coming from all walks of civic life, from elected leaders and governments to businesses, from faith leaders in every religious denomination to physicians and public health officials. This broad-based leadership has little to do with the science or politics of climate change, and everything to do with a growing sense that the problems are becoming acute and the time for broad and inclusive action has arrived. A hallmark of success occurs when local leaders grasp the urgent need for action and take it upon themselves to lead their community towards solutions. Examples of local leadership initiatives include:

**National League of Cities:** The National League of Cities has taken an assertive stance in promoting resilience among its member communities. Since 2015, NLC has hosted annual Resilient Cities Summits including more than 50 communities, and also convenes a cohort of 7 to 10 communities for a year-long Leadership in Community Resilience program. In addition to advocating for visionary policy perspectives and innovative funding for resiliency, NLC emphasizes the role of inclusive outreach and community engagement in building stronger communities. Prioritizing the needs of vulnerable residents and neighborhoods and involving those communities in the planning process is central to crafting comprehensive and equitable resilience plans. More important, building collaborative relationships with all sectors and communities can ensure that resilience programs grow more effective

over time. Vulnerable residents and neighborhoods and involving those communities in the planning process is central to crafting comprehensive and equitable resilience plans. More important, building collaborative relationships with all sectors and communities can ensure that resilience programs grow more effective over time.

**City of Evanston, IL:** Since setting a goal to be the most livable city in America, Evanston has emphasized employee and community engagement as major components of reaching that goal. In addition to launching community partnerships and workforce development programs, Evanston also initiated a training program to educate public employees about the rationale, goals, and elements of the city's livability program. Each year, all 800 city employees attend the Evanston Livability Academy, a half-day session designed to elevate their role in making the community more livable and sustainable. Led by the city manager and senior staff representing all city departments, the Livability Academy has established partnerships and collaboration across city departments while showing employees how their work supports the city's quality of life.

**Path to Positive Los Angeles:** (P2PLA) Los Angeles, a city many people associate with traffic congestion, air pollution, and waste, has emerged as a global leader in applying positive solutions to local climate impacts. Launched in 2014, P2PLA supports this success by bringing inspired new leaders to the fore and by equipping them to assert and achieve commitments to local solutions. P2PLA fosters supportive connections between local political and community leaders and grows relationships that generate public support for policy work. P2PLA is a vital voice for regional climate solutions with a Leadership Circle of more than 250 prominent local leaders supported by sector and city-wide gatherings. In 2017, Climate Day LA brought 1,200 Angelenos together and featured Mayor Eric Garcetti, youth and civic groups, and national faith leader Jackie DuPont-Walker of the AME Church. Mayor Garcetti recently announced a Green New Deal for Los Angeles and continues to build on P2PLA's success.

**Path to Positive Utah:** Originally launched in Salt Lake City, P2PUtah quickly gained interest across the state. In SLC, Mayor Jackie Biskupski has shown continuing local leadership by creating a Clean Energy Implementation Plan which will provide the city with 100% renewable

*Citizen and stakeholder participation in developing sustainable policies can be a rewarding process that leads to gains in the design, participation, and outcomes of local programs.*



energy by 2032. In a politically conservative state that faces risks to its communities and economy from climate change, generating broad participation meant learning how to support moderate, respected voices willing to discuss these risks and explore state and local solutions. Launching a strong program hinged on recruiting mainstream leaders from the business, political, faith, and civic sectors who would provide a call to action that resonates in Utah communities.



**Blessed Tomorrow:** Sector-based programs like Blessed Tomorrow help local houses of worship integrate climate solutions and strengthen the moral connections between faith and climate. Guided by a diverse coalition of faith leaders, Blessed Tomorrow is committed to creating a positive future for families, communities, and the world by providing resources to reduce pollution, save energy and money, and support leaders and individuals in climate solutions and collective action.



**Climate for Health:** Climate for Health is a national program that brings together leaders and institutions across the health sector committed to advancing climate solutions to protect the health of their patients and communities. Participants work to reduce their own climate impacts in hospitals, clinics, offices, and facilities throughout the country and to inspire their peers to do the same. The program also helps inform the American public about the health risks posed by a changing climate and clarifies the connection between their own health and the health of our environment.



# ENGAGEMENT: LEADERSHIP

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## **Building Your Leadership on Climate Action**

Like any leadership goal worth pursuing, good community engagement requires a focused effort that builds core skills and capacity, expands competency and confidence through practice and reflection, and incorporates learning from experience and new perspectives. Here's how to get started.

## **Get Comfortable Talking and Leading on Climate Action**

Look at the issues and the solutions from your constituents' perspectives. Understand your audience and "meet them where they live." Lead by example to show how local solutions save money, build a stronger community, and improve people's lives. Create leadership opportunities so your community can help you provide solutions. How you present your climate leadership matters, so use inspirational messages that resonate. Practice good communications, from broad framing to specific message content. Evaluate and update your materials to focus on local solutions that support people and their values.

## **Craft a Plan Together and Engage Everyone**

Engage the community as deeply as possible through influential community leaders who support your goals. Find and engage those already working on climate with local and national organizations. Work with the community to develop specific climate solutions that provide real benefits. Include residents and stakeholders early so they can do their part through easy actions. Provide them with specific measures that will get them started. Track progress and showcase victories and benefits so people see themselves as part of the solution.

## **Become a Role Model in Local Climate Solutions**

Addressing climate risks and opportunities in your community is similar to leading on other important community issues. As a local leader part of your job is to respond to problems by finding solutions and leading the community towards them. You are in a unique position to mobilize your community. Make sure you walk the walk — by taking climate actions in your own life as well. The imperative to lead is on your side, the time is now, and you are not alone.

## **Learn About Climate Solutions and Their Co-benefits**

Get advice and guidance from other local leaders and communities that are also enacting local climate and sustainability solutions. Look to replicate or adopt the

*Engage the community as deeply as possible through influential community leaders who support your goals.*



**Exhibits at Climate Day LA engage citizens in discussion of public transit benefits in reducing vehicle emissions.**

Photo Courtesy: City of Los Angeles

work being done by businesses, schools, institutions and leaders within your own community. Learn from as many resources as possible, including from the resources included in this guide.

### **Approach Local Climate Solutions Like a Campaign**

Campaign skills are familiar to most local elected officials and their staff. The perseverance and engagement that make campaigns successful will work as you advocate for support of your local climate goals.

- Express a highly visible purpose and goal
- Develop a disciplined message and repeat it often through many platforms
- Underscore the positive benefits of action: job creation, innovation, lower costs
- Garner broad, visible support from community leaders and institutions
- Challenge trusted leaders to involve their communities in the solutions
- Get members of the community to help in little and big ways
- Use local successes and savings, resiliency, and restoration stories to advance goals

### **Keep Going**

Climate impacts and solutions will continue to unfold over time. New policy, technology and social solutions will continue to arise. Learn from success — and failure — and make adjustments. Refresh your solutions plan and engagement program to leverage opportunities. Raise the bar toward achieving higher goals.

# ENGAGEMENT: STEPS & RESOURCES

1. **Make a Commitment or Declaration:** People are more responsive to calls to action from trusted, local leaders. A visible commitment that declares the importance of addressing local climate change risks and opportunities will resonate within the community and will provide them with the signal that these issues are important to them.
2. **Engage Government:** Make sustainability and resiliency core missions of your government. Start or expand an official city committee on sustainability or livability that includes stakeholders. Identify and assign staff leads across government agencies and departments to serve as the point persons for climate and resiliency work. Facilitate collaboration and communication between these agency staff leads. Elevate the call for solutions on these agencies' websites and public communications. The leadership you demonstrate will make it easier to ask, or require, local businesses and residents to pitch in and do their part.
3. **Empower Utilities:** The energy sources used to generate power are the most important factor in reducing climate pollution. Transitioning from fossil fuels (including coal and natural gas) towards renewable sources like solar and wind is essential to reducing climate pollution. Insist on clean sources of power and work with local utilities to transition away from fossil fuels, and leverage their existing programs to engage community members. With the costs of renewables steadily falling, government, business, and consumer demand for green energy will help make the business case for utilities in transition.
4. **Recruit Community Sector Leaders:** Chances are you are already working with local elected, business and other civic leaders to address climate change. Get them to publicly support your plans and solutions. Their visible public support will publicize and amplify the work you are doing. Ask these leaders to recruit their colleagues to speak up, and to include climate commitments in communications to their clients, customers, parishioners, members, associates, and constituents. Recruit these leaders as hosts and presenters at community forums and meetings, and to provide testimony at public hearings to promote climate solutions.

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Naples Daily News carries a front page story on ecoAmerica's survey of Southwest Florida residents' views and concerns about climate change, Feb 21, 2019.

5. **Get into the Media:** “Owned” media (websites, bulletins, newsletters and social media) and “earned” media (newspaper, radio, and television coverage) provide local leaders with numerous pathways to engage the public in your climate work. Share stories that inspire hope and action. Keep it positive by framing the benefits of your local solutions. When “bad news” stories arise, acknowledge the seriousness of the challenges and then pivot to the positive impacts that local government, stakeholders, and residents are making on solutions. For every bad news story, offer three good news stories.
6. **Engage Your Residents and Show Them Easy Solutions:** Real change will come when ordinary residents participate in climate solutions. Daily, personal choices — about energy purchasing and conservation, reducing waste, transportation options — are the keystones to accelerating sustainable, pro-climate action. Some of these choices come at a cost, but all of them come with tangible immediate and long-term benefits. Use engaged leaders to assure your residents that a positive, sustainable future is within their grasp. Once you have made the case for clean energy, efficiency, equity and healthy choices, it is critical to point people in the right direction. Make sure you include outreach to vulnerable populations that may be hard to reach. Provide a menu of easy choices, such as adjusting thermostats and switching to LED lights, purchasing renewable energy, taking public transit or buying a bike, eating seasonally and cutting back on meat. Start by offering easy and cheap solutions (that can save money and provide social benefits as well), and gradually step up the options to include more complex choices that may require more of an investment (but will still save money).
7. **Go Beyond Your Borders to Tell Your Neighbors, and the World:** Local leaders in America are accomplishing tremendous amounts of good in their communities — in climate solutions, fair and affordable housing, job creation and a host of other vital community issues — by borrowing the best policies and practices of their peers. Employ ideas that work in your community and share any improvements that could benefit leaders in other communities. Most important, form alliances with leaders in towns and counties in your immediate area. The power of regional action to bolster local

solutions, through energy and transit planning, purchasing and contracting agreements, and land use practices, will build momentum and provide tangible solutions across many more communities. Regional leadership can also provide a good base of support for state and federal advocacy.

*No one ever ran for city council, county commissioner, or mayor to solve climate change, but its challenges are now present in our communities — along with opportunities to solve them.*

## SELECTED ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

### **ecoAmerica:**

ecoAmerica builds institutional leadership, public support, and political will for climate solutions in the United States. We help national mainstream organizations elevate their climate leadership, providing them strategy, tools, and resources to demonstrate visible climate leadership, empower climate literacy, engage all residents, and build collective action and advocacy. We do this through work in three sectors: Faith ([Blessed Tomorrow](#)), Health ([Climate for Health](#)), and local communities ([Path to Positive Communities](#)).

### **Institute for Sustainable**

**Communities:** Empowering Community Resilience shares ways to reinvent community engagement, build capacity for deeper engagement, and communicate with diverse stakeholders.

### **Center for Climate Change**

**Communication:** conducts unbiased communication research, helps government agencies, civic organizations, professional associations, and companies apply social science research to improve their public engagement, and trains students and professionals with the

knowledge and skills necessary to improve public engagement with climate change.

**What We Know** is a project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science dedicated to ensuring that the three “R’s” of climate are communicated to the public: Reality; Risk; and Response.



# ecoAmerica

*building climate leadership*

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[ecoAmerica.org](http://ecoAmerica.org)

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## **Thank you to our Path to Positive partners:**

Climate Resolve  
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Institute for Sustainable Communities  
Local Government Commission  
National League of Cities  
Urban Sustainability Directors Network  
Utah Clean Energy

Sign up for the monthly newsletter at [PathToPositive.org](http://PathToPositive.org) to get fresh ideas and resources regularly, including webinars and more detailed guides.

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