Current City Approaches to Inclusive Climate Action Planning

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The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) founded in 1980. We act as a catalyst to advance energy efficiency policies, programs, technologies, investments, & behaviors.

Our research explores economic impacts, financing options, behavior changes, program design, and utility planning, as well as US national, state, & local policy. Our work is made possible by foundation funding, contracts, government grants, and conference revenue.
Why a focus on equity?

Low-income households and people of color face high energy bills and low access to energy efficiency.
2019 Scorecard Changes

- 51 to 75 Cities
- More equity metrics
- More policy-performance metrics
- Renewable energy metrics
Equitable Community Outreach

City has demonstrated a unique and expanded approach to conducting public outreach to marginalized groups compared with outreach to other city constituencies. This outreach must offer individual residents an opportunity to engage in a direct dialogue with permanent city staff and provide their feedback or suggestions regarding an entire plan or multiple initiatives.

Equitable Decision-Making

City has created a formal role for marginalized community residents or local organizations representing those communities to participate in decision-making that affects the creation or implementation of a local energy, sustainability, or climate plan.

Accountability to Social Equity

The city has adopted specific goals, metrics, or other protocols that track how multiple energy, sustainability, or climate action initiatives are affecting local marginalized constituencies.
Outreach efforts focused only on educating marginalized groups

Using an equitable approach for only one climate action initiative

Outreach that did not allow for a dialogue between residents and permanent city staff

Employing equity officers, fellows, or ambassadors

Efforts that were not active or completed
19 of 75 cities received some credit
- Equitable outreach: 7 cities
- Equitable decision-making: 7 cities
- Accountability to equity: 14 cities

3 cities received full credit
- Minneapolis
- Providence
- Seattle

3 cities received credit for two metrics
- Cincinnati
- San Antonio
- Washington, DC

Cities Receiving Points
Formal Decision-Making Roles for Residents

- Formal decision-making roles can take several forms:
  - Working Groups
  - Task Forces
  - Committees

- Create a formal group early in climate action planning for maximum impact
- The group can guide community outreach, plan development, implementation, and creating protocols to evaluate the city’s initiatives
- Participants’ time and work is funded
“They can actually listen to what we’re saying and help fund the money we need in our communities.”

“We will implement all of these recommendations and actually do the work, not just in the office of sustainability. We’ll build to change the whole city hall and then hopefully the state one day, and then the world.”

-Monica Huertas, NO LNG IN PVD
There is no single approach that will work for all communities.

Cities report more equitable outreach when community members **design and lead** those efforts.

Community-led outreach focuses on increasing:

- Recognition of individuals and families
- Community ability to affect city decisions
- Resources available to address local concerns
• Some cities have published equity metrics
  • Measure progress towards certain climate plan goals
  • Example: Goals to reduce energy burdens

• Other cities have adopted the use of equity screening tools
  • Developed to evaluate a wider range of city actions that can affect marginalized communities
  • Developed in partnership with external organizations
  • Equity or environmental justice committees/working groups are active in the development of these tools
Connecting Equitable Planning to Energy Efficiency

Equity-focused energy efficiency programs often involve other city departments and external funding

• Common Funding: grants, utility franchise fees, CDBG, HOME

16 of 19 cities actively partner with at least one local utility

• Some cities have municipal or sustainable energy utilities

Types of program approaches

• Building-focused (ex: Philadelphia Energy Authority)
• Place-based (ex: Minneapolis Green Zones)
• Comprehensive (ex: Dallas Housing Policy)
Contact Information

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