

Unanswered Questions from U.S. EPA's Local Climate and Energy Program Webcast Climate Action Planning November 17, 2011

General Questions

1. *Can each of the presenters talk a little bit about what their personal background or positions were, and if they had either prior experience, or specific training on sustainability planning, GHG inventory, and climate action planning etc., BEFORE they were selected to carry out this work and or developed their own expertise DURING the process? (These answers would help other looking to build capacity within their organizations in RFQ or developing criteria for job descriptions, etc.) It would also help if you could go into what structures/staff were new to the organizations vs. scope added to existing positions.*

Answer: Julia Parzen (Chicago): Chicago's was my first climate action plan. The experience I had was project management, facilitation, and many contacts with expertise in climate action planning.

Dennis Murphey (Kansas City): I previously served as the municipal environmental director for 6+ years in Cincinnati before my position in Kansas City, in addition to several other environmental positions in state government (Oregon & Kansas) and the private sector. However, I had no experience or formal training in sustainability, GHG inventories, or climate action planning prior to undertaking development of the Kansas City, MO climate protection plan. I've often described my climate protection planning experience in terms of jumping off a cliff with a parachute and having faith that it would open before I landed – others have compared it to flying a plane while you're still building it. Three things I did that paid great dividends in our process: One, I reviewed other municipal climate action plans and processes and the Climate Protection Manual for Cities (compiled by Natural Capitalism Solutions). Two, I tapped into key internal staff resources (the new sustainability coordinator, city planners, etc.) and an excellent group of facilitators who assisted our four work groups in staying focused, on task, and on time. Three, I ensured that we had two community leaders on our Steering Committee who were very knowledgeable and passionate about climate protection & sustainability and were highly regarded by virtually everyone in our city (including all of their colleagues on the Steering Committee).

Chris Carrick (Central New York): As a doctoral student in City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, Chris Carrick received a Fulbright Scholarship for his dissertation research on sustainability planning in British Columbia. While in British Columbia he studied with William E. Rees, professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia and the originator of the "ecological footprint" concept and co-developer of the method. Since becoming the manager of the CNY RPDB's Energy Program, he has received training in conducting GHG inventories and preparing climate action plans through ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and has participated in training workshops offered by the Institute for Sustainable Communities. He has also compiled a library of local and regional plans from throughout North America and Europe and has learned quite a bit from studying these examples.

Sam Gordon (Central New York): Sam Gordon came from a community planning and design background without specific experience in the GHG inventory or the Climate Action Planning process. Sam was the principal of an independent consulting firm, and worked previously in the community development field.

- I'd like to know from the speakers as to whether any of the communities included water resources in their development of the climate action plans. And for water resources, I'm including not only water quality, but also water supply and flood management.*

Answer: Julia Parzen (Chicago): In Chicago's Climate Action Plan, water was addressed in water use efficiency and flood management, but not water quality.

Dennis Murphey (Kansas City): Concurrent with our climate protection planning process, the City of Kansas City was also engaged in development of a multi-billion dollar long-term control plan for addressing stormwater and combined sewer overflows (the most expensive public works undertaking in the City's history). We integrated recommendations re water resource management into our climate protection plan and had members of our climate protection work groups who also served on the City's Wet Weather Community Panel. That panel provided input to the City's Water Services Department & the Mayor/City Council re the incorporation of "green solutions" into our approaches to storm water management and mitigation of sewer overflows for a 25-year program that was approved by EPA and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Chris Carrick and Sam Gordon (Central New York): So far, none of our communities have included water resources planning in their climate action plans, primarily because water scarcity is not a concern in our region. We are working with them to include flood management issues as it relates to climate adaptation, but our communities' CAPs are primarily focused on climate mitigation strategies.

- Those who have completed plans, can you share strategies, challenges, etc. with implementation?*

Answer: Julia Parzen (Chicago): Building a lot of buy-in during plan development and then carrying this support immediately into implementation helps. Having a constituency that cares about implementation is so valuable. Also having a way to measure progress aid learning and momentum.

Dennis Murphey (Kansas City): As I mentioned in my presentation, one of our key strategies was to include leaders on our Climate Protection Plan Steering Committee who represented the wide range of stakeholder groups (business, labor, metro area planning/council of governments, environmental organizations, neighborhood associations, City departments, etc.) who were going to be essential players in implementation of our plan. These organizations continue to be partners with the City in implementing the plan and we reach out to other organizations as partners and look for common objectives (e.g. reducing energy use & utility bills, rejuvenating urban core neighborhoods, providing healthy locally-produced food), even if their motivation for working on mutually-beneficial projects are not to reduce GHG emissions.

We've also seized opportunities presented with federal stimulus funding and other grants to craft numerous applications based upon implementing measures (e.g. energy efficiency, renewable energy, transit, bike/pedestrian initiatives, green infrastructure, etc.) in our climate protection plan. Also, because there is such a strong commitment by our Mayor & City Council to our climate protection plan (it was unanimously adopted in July 2008), city staff and private entities who come to City Council for funding or project approval want to be able to legitimately claim that their requests are consistent with or a part of the City's climate protection plan.

Notwithstanding the extensive grant support we've received for implementing measures in our plan, funding remains a big challenge. Another challenge is the fact that we are a city of 480,000 people in an area of 320 square miles. To put that into perspective, we have 100,000 fewer people than Portland, OR in an area 3x Portland's size. That makes effective transit options difficult, it increases the cost of providing basic city services, and we have developers who prefer to propose greenfield development in the outer reaches of the city rather than doing infill development in the urban core.

Chris Carrick and Sam Gordon (Central New York): While our plans are not yet complete, we have focused on demonstration projects that have been an important vehicle for developing an understanding of the benefits associated with climate action.

Questions for Neelam Patel and Dan Wallach (EPA)

1. *Does EPA intend to step into the current community greenhouse gas protocol void (given that ICLEI development of its one has paused)?*

Answer: An EPA representative from the State and Local Climate and Energy Program participates on the steering committee responsible for developing the ICLEI community protocol. ICLEI is lead on this initiative and at this time, EPA will continue to support ICLEI in an effort to leverage existing investments and minimize redundancy.

2. *With multiple benefits, why not just do a Sustainability Plan?*

Answer: Analysis of multiple benefits (air quality, water quality, water generation, improved public health, cost savings) can be included in a sustainability plan, a climate action plan or an energy conservation plan.

Questions for Julia Parzen (Chicago)

1. *Can you tell us more about what software/tracking tools you used and costs of these?*

Answer: For Chicago, these were all custom tools created from scratch by consultants or city staff. Most are available on the Chicago Climate Action website research page.

2. *What advice would you give to communities that are developing climate action plans that don't have the plethora of resources available to them like Chicago?*

Answer: With few resources it is even more important to build on existing studies and initiatives, whether public or community based. There usually is more available than people will realize. Places like ICLEI can provide help with moving through the steps in creating a plan. It is helpful to review plans from other cities and use their analysis where possible.

3. *What resistance, if any, did you face during the climate action planning process?*

Answer: There was resistance to some of the more ambitious goals. The scale of change required is significant. Some goals were scaled back as a result of negotiations. Others withstood the negotiations.

Questions for Dennis Murphey (Kansas City)

1. *Has Kansas City done any work with Adaptation?*

Answer: No. We intend to do so, but currently we are focusing our efforts on climate mitigation measures.

2. *What are your measurements telling you about the effectiveness of your plans? And when you modeled the actions to the goals, did your actions get your city to the goal?*

Answer: Before our Steering Committee established our goals for reducing community-wide GHG emissions 30% below year 2000 levels by 2020, they required calculations/modeling to demonstrate that it was not just ambitious, but also realistic. Our climate protection work group members and City staff collaborated with members of the Greater KC Chamber of Commerce's Energy Policy Task Force to validate the "reasonableness" of our goals prior to their approval by the Steering Committee. We were fortunate to have our local investor-owned electrical utility, Kansas City Power & Light Co., concurrently negotiating an agreement whereby they were committing to achieving a 6 million ton/year offset in GHG emissions thru energy efficiency measures and additional wind-power generating capacity that made significant community-wide GHG reduction goals more achievable.

3. *What other federal grants are available such as the Better buildings grant program, now and going forward?*

Answer: In the current circumstances in Washington, DC, the future of significant federal grants (e.g. EECBG formula grants & Better Buildings Program) seems very unlikely. Another likelihood that may be equally counterproductive to our efforts is the reduction/elimination of federal tax credits (at the utility & residential scales) for energy efficiency & renewable energy projects. We hope that our local utilities will continue to provide energy efficiency rebates and support for local low-income home weatherization activities.

Probably our best hope in the area of federal grants is transportation funding for transit & bike/pedestrian initiatives, although even those sources of funding will be smaller and more

competitive to obtain in the future. We also utilized Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) funding from EPA to support the alternative fuel program for our municipal fleet. Future funding levels for CMAQ are also uncertain.

4. *What was the motivation for Mayor Barnes to sign the U.S. Conference of Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement in 2005? Was there any controversy?*

Answer: Mayor Barnes signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement in 2005 (in addition to approx 150 of her colleagues nationwide) at the USCM meeting where it was adopted. I can only surmise that she was persuaded by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and other attendees at the 2005 meeting that it was the right thing to do, particularly in view of the lack of action by the federal government and most state governments to address the challenge of climate change.

When it came time for the City Council to adopt a resolution directing the City Manager & Chief Environmental Officer to undertake the development of a climate protection plan pursuant to the USCM Climate Protection Agreement, there was controversy over one issue: reference to the Kyoto Protocol. Since we always intended to go well beyond Kyoto in our climate protection plan, we deleted any reference to the Kyoto Protocol from the resolution and it passed unanimously (and with no further opposition from the Chamber of Commerce).

5. *If Kansas City had not been able to secure substantial funding from DOE, how might that have affected the goals and implementation of KC's climate action plan?*

Answer: Since we developed our plan and goals prior to obtaining any DOE funding, federal funding had no impact on our goal setting. However, with the budgetary constraints of the past 3+ years, if we had not been able to secure substantial DOE funding, it would have significantly delayed implementation of many GHG reduction measures related to energy efficiency & renewable energy initiatives in our plan.

Questions for Sam Gordon and Chris Carrick (Central New York)

1. *Is the program open to work with municipalities outside the selected counties? For example municipalities in Tompkins County.*

Answer: Our program is only open to municipalities within our 5 county region of Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties.

2. *Did ICLEI provide any training for the city staff and college students in GHG Inventory?*

Answer: Through our program funds we are providing participants with up to \$1000 for our municipal participants to join ICLEI for one year. ICLEI membership provides each municipality with access to ICLEI's resources including software, online training modules, and access to ICLEI technical assistance over the phone. Additionally we held a training workshop for our participants where ICLEI staff was present, as well as US EPA staff, NYS DEC staff, and

NYSERDA staff (we utilized some of our EPA funding to bring ICLEI staff to our workshop). Interns were also invited to the workshop. We have also met personally with the interns and project staff from the participating municipalities to provide some preliminary training and guidance throughout the inventory process.

- 3. Can you tell us more about what scope, or work activities were performed by the college students exactly? And how long did this work take?*

Answer: The interns have been helping to collect ghg emissions data – interacting with department heads, meeting with municipal staff, contacting authorities, utility providers, and others to gather the necessary data. The interns have also been entering the data into ICLEI’s CACP software, and into the EPA portfolio manager. The length of time really depends on the size and scope of the inventory, but for the most part students have been involved on a semester long time frame.

- 4. What issues, if any, did you face in partnering with universities? Were any hesitant to work with you?*

Answer: The issues that we have had in partnering with universities have been mostly logistical in nature: how to assess academic credits, who supervises the students work, working within the academic calendar and the semester time schedule for example. We have not encountered universities that were hesitant to work with us – after all the ones that we reached out to have signed the American College and University President’s Climate Commitment and therefore have already engaged in their own Climate Action Efforts.

- 5. Taking into account the different types of communities you are working with, what differences, if any, have you seen in the reception by the general public regarding sustainability initiatives?*

Answer: We have been primarily focused on working with municipal leaders at this point. There has been some negative reception towards climate action from the municipal leadership level, especially in the more rural communities. Connecting the program to co-benefits such as energy and dollar savings has been key to the continued buy-in by legislative officials. When we are conducting public outreach, we have focused mainly on energy efficiency and have not used the “Climate” brand.