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# CLIMATE ACTION PLANS: AN OVERVIEW

## WHAT IS A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN?

Climate action plans (CAPs) are comprehensive roadmaps that outline specific activities that a city or agency will undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate action plans build upon the information gathered by greenhouse gas inventories and focus on activities that can achieve emission reductions in the most cost effective manner.

**QUESTION:** ARE CITIES REQUIRED TO CONDUCT GHG INVENTORIES AND CREATE CLIMATE ACTION PLANS (CAPS)?

**SHORT ANSWER: NO, BUT...**

## LAWS AND REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO GHG EMISSIONS

Through legislation such as AB 32 and SB 375 the State of California has shown national leadership on climate change. Aspects of climate legislation and planning frameworks will impact local governments and planning agencies. Taking action will help your city be prepared.

### General Plan Updates

The California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Attorney General's office (under Jerry Brown and Kamala Harris) both agree (and have enforced) that General Plan Updates should include GHG analysis in their CEQA preparation.

Although Climate Action Plans (CAPs) are not mandatory, they are one way to satisfy the State's CEQA requirements for general plan updates. To learn other ways to fulfill this requirement, see CEQA Guidelines § 15183.5(a).

### CAPS and CEQA Streamlining

New CEQA guidelines from SB 97 (2007) require agencies to address GHG emissions. Lead agencies are required to analyze the GHG emissions of proposed projects and must reach a conclusion regarding the significance of those emissions (See CEQA Guidelines § 15064.4). When a project's GHG emissions are significant, lead agencies must consider a range of potential mitigation measures to reduce those emissions. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(c)).

Qualified CAPs can be used to streamline the environmental review of future projects. This can save time and money during the environmental review process. In order to get the benefits of streamlining, CEQA requires that a climate action plan meet a few requirements. The plan must: quantify GHG emissions within a defined area; establish a GHG emissions reduction target; identify emissions from planned activities; determine measures to achieve the specified level of emissions; monitor progress and amend if necessary; and adopt the following environmental review using a public process.

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## CREATING A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

### How are Climate Action Plans developed? Who should be included in the process of developing a plan?

Usually, an action planning committee or team is assembled either internally or externally. The climate action committee then engages stakeholders and the community for input. This committee can include: municipal employees, elected officials, religious institutions, private sector representatives, community groups and engaged citizenry, large employers (such as hospitals or retirement facilities), transportation planners, regional agencies, etc.

### Selecting Reduction Measures

Every city will have different needs depending on their goals and priorities, but there are a number of things to consider when selecting GHG reduction measures. These include: maximizing reductions, cost-effectiveness, stakeholder support, regional collaboration, ties to local priorities and any other priorities a city may have.

## CO-BENEFITS OF A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

A good climate action plan does much more than reduce greenhouse gas emission; it lays the framework for future improvements to the city, making it a better place to live and work for residents. Here are a few ways that the local community can benefit:

### Money Savings

Reducing a community's operating costs is one of the main potential benefits of a climate action plan. Developing climate and energy strategies can help your local government slash energy costs to save taxpayer dollars.

### Job Creation

Climate action plans can create new green job opportunities and help stimulate the local economy by making investments in the city's future.

### Improvement in Air Quality and Public Health

Another benefit to reducing GHG emissions is an improvement in air quality. Bad air quality harms public health, and low-income communities often have the worst air quality. Improving air quality is one way to make sure that low-income communities benefit from reducing GHG emissions

### Leverages for Funding Tied to State Goals

There are numerous grants, rebates, and loans that are available to local governments taking action on climate change. The Funding Wizard from Cool California provides a searchable and updated list of funding opportunities for local governments.

## The LARC

The LARC brings together leadership from the LA region's government, academia, business, and non-governmental organizations that are committed to implement innovative strategies to address climate change impacts.

**Website:** [www.LARegionalCollaborative.com](http://www.LARegionalCollaborative.com)  
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