



PE7 Action: Climate Adaptation Plan

3 Points

8 Points

11 Points



BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

A. Why is this action important?

A climate adaptation plan outlines a vision and set of strategies to improve a community's resilience to climate change based on their local physical, economic, and social vulnerabilities. When local leaders work with their communities to adapt to climate change, they build the capacity to evolve with changing conditions and protect resources for generations to come. Developing a climate adaptation plan generally comes after identifying local planning gaps (PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience) and assessing physical, economic, and social equity vulnerabilities (PE7 Action: Climate Vulnerability Assessment). During the planning process, local governments should work with residents and local groups to establish a shared vision of a resilient future and define specific local climate adaptation strategies to reduce vulnerabilities and achieve their vision. A climate adaptation planning process should consider diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) from start to finish.

B. How to implement this action

Under the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program, the climate adaptation planning process can be appropriately scaled for the size and vulnerability of a community. For example, a larger city with significant climate risks may choose to do a more in-depth process for a standalone plan. Alternatively, a smaller town or village with fewer vulnerabilities may opt for a more streamlined process to create a smaller plan or create a chapter in a climate action plan or other planning document.

When developing a community climate adaptation plan, essential steps include the following:

1. **Analyze the demographic makeup of your community** to understand what a fair representation of citizens will look like. Identify stakeholders who represent different neighborhoods, community-based organizations, and businesses, as well as a range of representatives from traditionally marginalized groups. Consider who has not been at the table and then make sure that those groups are meaningfully looped in. Analyze the municipal departments and committees serving your community to determine who should be involved in this planning process (e.g., Departments of Public Works, Planning, Police and Fire, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development).
2. **Convene a diverse and representative subcommittee** (based on your results from step 1) to coordinate the effort and perform public outreach and engagement from the beginning, scaled appropriately to the size and complexity of the community. The subcommittee should include staff members and a subset of the local CSC task force who are focused on climate adaptation, as well as a cross-section of community stakeholders including residents, business owners, and local and regional organizations. The subcommittee coordinator should strive to achieve appropriate representation of race, class, gender, and all relevant categories.
3. **Develop and implement a public engagement strategy** for the planning process using best practices for inclusive engagement (see further guidance below). Plan meetings to be accessible in terms of location and transportation options, and if possible, provide food, childcare and/or compensation for members' attendance.
4. **Evaluate how climate conditions may change in the community** (e.g., increased flooding, heat and drought) using the most up-to-date climate projections for your region (see resources below in Section G). Ideally you will be able to revisit the results uncovered from PE7 Action: Climate Vulnerability Assessment and PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience.
5. **Co-create a vision for community climate adaptation and resilience.** Host public participation session(s) to have conversations about local vulnerabilities, important community assets and planning gaps, and develop a vision for the community. A vision is a brief, inspirational statement that looks into the future and creates a mental image of the ideal state that a community wants to achieve. The vision should reflect the community's aspirations and values as

they relate to adapting to climate change and building local resilience. See examples of resilience visions below in Section G. To create the vision statements, solicit input via multiple channels, like online surveys and pop up stands in public spaces. Compile public input into a draft document that describes the vision for the future and what resilience means to the community. Meaningfully share the draft vision document with the community by going beyond posting on a hard-to-find website page or only sending it out to community members already in the know. Establish a system for receiving public comments and revise draft vision and goals based on stakeholder feedback.

6. **Develop a implementation plan** comprising a list of climate adaptation strategies that will help your community achieve its vision by addressing changing conditions, prioritized assets and vulnerabilities, and the policy gaps identified during PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience. (Also see further guidance on developing climate adaptation strategies below.)
 - Prioritize strategies that reduce risk and provide valuable ecological and social equity co-benefits. For example, training and certifying local workers from disadvantaged backgrounds to install and maintain green infrastructure will reduce stormwater flooding while creating co-benefits of improving local cooling, ecology and economic injustice.
 - Share the draft strategies/implementation plan with the public via in-person events and/or via virtual presentation and engagement (e.g., public workshop or online webinar and survey). Revise the strategies based on stakeholder input. This may also include reassessing the prioritization of strategies.
 - Create a timeline and process for regularly revisiting and updating the climate adaptation plan, including tracking completed strategies in your implementation plan.
 - Facilitate approval of the plan by the community's elected officials.
7. **Revisit and update your plan.** Local governments should revisit and refresh their adaptation plan every ten years as well as track progress on implementation strategies (e.g., number completed, in process, on going or incomplete). Plan updates can also be triggered with new understanding of hazards like a major storm event or updated state climate projections (see links in Section G to ClimAID and NYS Part 490). These updates should include the latest climate science data and projections, description of local changing conditions and major events experienced, consider any changes in policy or infrastructure since the last plan, and modify the existing strategies or add new recommendations as appropriate. Significant changes should undergo community input via surveys and other methods as described above.

Guidance on developing climate adaptation strategies

Climate adaptation strategies should cover a range of categories (e.g., municipal planning and operations, zoning and codes, public outreach and education, and capital projects, including structural and non-structural solutions) that address various at-risk sectors (e.g., critical infrastructure, emergency management, natural resources, recreation, agriculture, socially vulnerable populations). Strategies should directly address vulnerable community assets (as identified in PE7 Action: Climate Vulnerability Assessment and local planning gaps (as identified in PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience). For example, if your vulnerability assessment revealed that the community's cooling center is in the floodplain, the plan could include a strategy to floodproof, relocate, or designate a new location. As another example, if the community's capital improvement plan does not consider drought or other climate risks, then your climate adaptation plan could include a strategy to update the capital improvement plan to incorporate such risks. For more strategy ideas, see plans from other communities, Model Local Laws for Increasing Resilience, and other links below in Section G.

Communities should especially consider including strategies to implement many of the actions in CSC Pledge Element 7, like PE7 Action: Conserve Natural Areas, PE7 Action: Green Infrastructure, PE7 Action: Culverts and Dams, and PE7 Action: Strategic Relocation. Several of these strategies could be specific capital projects. Strategies could include more general actions to create a list of specific projects that will address a specific vulnerability. For example, for flooding, a watershed assessment can highlight the most strategic actions. Taking a watershed approach when developing strategies that address flooding, water quality and quantity, and water infrastructure will help the community understand uphill and upstream sources of flooding and assist in being strategic in prioritizing actions; see PE7 Action: Watershed Assessment for Flooding and PE7 Action: Watershed Plan for Water Quality.

Strategies should specifically include recommended changes to the community's comprehensive plan and other relevant plans (like hazard mitigation plans or local waterfront revitalization plans) to include climate adaptation. The implementation of such updates to a comprehensive plan may be eligible for points under PE6 Action: Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements, which includes three points for promoting adaptation to climate change.

The plan should identify lead entities responsible for implementing each strategy. To the extent possible, it could also

organize strategies by their estimated timeframes, costs and co-benefits.

Guidance on creating an inclusive planning process

An inclusive planning process values, includes, and works with a fair representation of citizens from the community and is essential to completing this action. Local governments should develop or update a climate adaptation plan using an inclusive planning process that includes all stakeholders from the very beginning, such as: residents, local leaders, businesses, employers, schools, landowners and tenant organizations, local farmers, local government entities representing all sectors, transportation entities, utilities, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, churches, and all others affected. Representation ideally will reflect the demographic makeup of the community's residents.

It is essential to include underrepresented and marginalized communities who may be at greater risk from climate change impacts. Groups to specifically target include black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, low-income residents, people with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, people who speak English as a second language, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (or questioning) and other (LGBTQ+) residents, individuals experiencing homelessness, youth, seniors, rural and urban residents, and residents of dwellings with greater exposure to the impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding, heat).

Remember that these groups are not a monolith, and outreach will look different from group to group and from community to community. Working with a diversity of stakeholders across sectors and scales will likely increase the quality of potential adaptation strategies, provide opportunities for new partnerships, and help build local support for implementing your plan.

Best practices for inclusive stakeholder engagement

- Commit to listening and learning; focus on asking open-ended questions.
- Be patient and process-oriented (as opposed to goal-oriented).
- Build long-term relationships to pursue projects that have tangible benefits for the community.
- Expand and diversify partnerships with community-based organizations whose scopes go beyond environmental work.
- Engage residents of most heavily impacted neighborhoods as leaders in the process.
- Increase the internal capacity of the adaptation subcommittee to incorporate equity considerations by completing antiracism and/or equity and the environment trainings; see resources below in Section G.
- For project communications, use multiple platforms to reach as much of your community as possible, including social media, emails, websites, and other virtual means as well as printed materials posted in public spaces/events and mailed to residents (e.g., on the back of their water bill).
- Consider the following guidance for events:
 - Advertise events through outreach venues used by target audience.
 - Offer events at a time of day/day of week that is most convenient for working people, or in conjunction with existing community meeting and events.
 - Offer events in target neighborhoods at trusted locations (e.g., churches/community centers).
 - Offer childcare, food and stipends to event attendees.
 - Be willing to alter meeting plans and processes if they are not working well for participants.
 - Address historical injustices and current inequities that impact residents.
 - Employ a peer-to-peer, rather than “expert lecturer” approach.
 - Compensate an organizer from within the community.
 - Simplify and translate outreach messages to be more easily accessible.

C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

The timeframe and costs for this task depend on the level of public engagement and the staff resources available. The climate adaptation planning process can be appropriately scaled for the size and vulnerability of a community. Local governments can anticipate a timeline of approximately six months to one year or more to develop a comprehensive climate adaptation plan. Project costs include staff time and possibly consultants to support the development of the plan and support for stakeholder attendance in the form of food, transportation, childcare, and/or compensation.

D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this action?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments and all departments. The department, office, or committee that leads local climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for implementing this action. Implementation may be led by the chief elected official's office, the department of the environment or planning, or by a volunteer body, such as a Conservation Advisory Council, watershed group, or a subcommittee of the local CSC task force. Cultivating cross-department involvement and support is also critical since a variety of staff and local stakeholders may be involved in implementation. The climate adaptation plan could also be developed at a regional level, by the county or a regional organization. Local governments claiming credit for participation in a regional initiative will be required to demonstrate substantial involvement in that process to be eligible for points. The same departments or representatives listed above should be involved in a regional effort.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Points for this action are tiered based on completion of the components described below, led by a subcommittee that represents the unique diversity of your community. Both components must have occurred within ten years prior to the application date, but the two components are separate; e.g., applicants can submit a vision without having a plan in place yet.

	<i>POSSIBLE POINTS</i>
Create a community-developed climate adaptation and resilience vision statement using an inclusive public engagement process	3
Create and adopt a standalone climate adaptation plan (or chapter within a climate action plan or other planning document) that includes implementation strategies to directly address local vulnerabilities and planning gaps, using an inclusive public engagement process	8

F. What to submit

To be eligible for points under this action, submit a list of subcommittee members, the affiliation of each member, and the date when the group was convened. All components of this action must have taken place within ten years from the date of application.

In addition, submit the following documentation for the two point tiers:

Vision: Submit a copy or web address of the final climate adaptation and resilience vision statement. Also include a summary of the inclusive public engagement process that was used to create the vision (see guidance in Section B).

Plan: Submit a copy or web address of the climate adaptation plan (or adaptation chapter of a climate action plan or other plan). The plan must contain up-to-date climate change projections, a list of strategies to address local vulnerabilities and build local adaptive capacity, and a summary of the inclusive public engagement process that was used to create the plan. Include verification of adoption by the local government. If the county or other regional entity led the plan development process, also submit evidence of substantial involvement in that process.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or examples

Examples of community resilience visions

- [Visions And Principles For A Resilient Catskill, page 32 \(PDF\)](#)
- [A Flood-Resilient Kingston: Vision for the Future pages 26 to 30 \(PDF\)](#)

- [Beacon Sustainability And Climate resilience Vision, draft version For public comment \(PDF\)](#)

Examples of climate adaptation plans and chapters

- [Resilience Roadmap: Planning for Piermont's Future \(2014\)](#)
- [Planning for Rising Waters: Final Report of the City of Kingston Waterfront Tidal Flooding Task Force \(2013\)](#)
- [Resilient Los Angeles \(2018\)](#)
- [Vision 2020, New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, New York, NY, Climate Resilience Goal:](#)
- [Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan – Planning for Our Future \(2015\), Section on Climate Change Adaptation](#) and [Appendix B, Public Comments and Responses](#)
- [Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan \(2013\)](#)
- [Keene, NH, Comprehensive Master Plan](#)
- [City of Lewes, DE, Multi-Hazard and Climate Adaptation Plan](#)

Guidance for developing climate adaptation strategies

- [Climate projections found in Responding to Climate Change in New York State \(ClimAID\)](#)
- [New York State \(NYS\) Part 490, Projected Sea-level Rise](#)
- [NYS Flood Risk Management Guidance \(PDF\)](#)
- [NYS Model Local Laws to Increase Resilience](#)
- [Columbia Hudson River Flooding Decision Support System mapping tool](#)
- [Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper](#)
- [Cornell WRI Resources for Resilience](#)
- [New York, NY, Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency Report \(2013\)](#)
- [New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program](#)
- [ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability's Preparing for Climate Change: A Guidebook for Local, Regional, and State Governments](#)
- [Envision™ Rating Tool \(sustainability rating program for horizontal infrastructure projects\)](#)
- [Sustainable Sites system for creating sustainable and resilient land development projects](#)
- [LEED for Neighborhood Development](#)
- [International Green Construction Code](#)
- [FEMA National Risk Index](#) - online tool for identifying risks related to natural hazards by county or census track

Guidance for incorporating social equity and inclusive engagement

- [NYS People First: How To Plan Events Everyone Can Attend](#)
- [Antioch University, The Path to Environmental Justice is Local](#)
- [Sustainable Connecticut's Equity Toolkit](#)
- [Antioch New England's Center for Climate Preparedness and Community Resilience: Race and the Environmental Movement Webinar Series](#)
- [Climate Action through Equity, Portland, OR](#)
- [Racial Equity Tools' Action Plan Examples](#)
- [PUSH Buffalo's PUSH Blue program:](#)
- [The New School's Local Policies For Environmental Justice: A National Scan](#)
- [People and place: Understanding social dimensions of resilience in the Climate-adaptive Design Studio, see stakeholder matrix in the Outreach strategy section](#)
- [American Planning Association Social Equity](#)

H. Recertification Requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.