

NYSAC
— NEW YORK STATE —
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Climate Programs and Grants

Resources for Counties

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State Programs to Support Local Climate Action

New York's counties are at the forefront of efforts to combat climate change. Through launching local initiatives and participating in state programs like Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities, counties have made and are making significant investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and increasing their resiliency to the effects of climate change.

They have also been sharing ideas and developing partnerships to mitigate and prepare for climate change through NYSAC's Standing Committee on Climate Action.

It can be challenging for county officials with many responsibilities outside of responding to climate change to navigate the web of programs that various state agencies administer to support local climate action.

To help counties take full advantage of the state resources available to them, this white paper aims to centralize information about the certification programs, technical assistance, and grant funding that New York State offers to help local governments protect the environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and make New York a leader in clean energy.

Climate Action Frameworks

Clean Energy Communities and Climate Smart Communities are two main certification programs that New York State has created to guide and support local climate action. Climate Smart Communities is organized around 10 pledge elements that provide a framework for completing over 100 climate mitigation and adaptation actions.

Clean Energy Communities similarly allows local governments to receive points, grants, and recognition for completing the program's 13 high-impact actions. The sections that follow provide an overview of both programs and explain how they relate to one another.



Clean Energy Communities

The Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program was launched by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) in 2016 to promote and support municipal participation in the shift to clean energy. In January 2021, NYSERDA launched the Leadership Round of the CEC program, which added additional actions to further the success of communities that earned the CEC designation.

Through Clean Energy Communities, New York State recognizes the important role municipal leaders play in transitioning to greener energy sources and provides guidance, recognition, and funding to support clean energy choices and actions. Participation in the CEC program involves connecting with a regional coordinator, completing “high-impact actions”, and earning points towards designation and grant funding.

High Impact Actions

The following CEC high-impact actions earn points toward grant funding and designation.

1. Unified solar permit
2. Energy code enforcement training
3. PACE financing
4. Clean energy upgrades
5. Clean heating and cooling demo
6. 100 percent renewables for municipal operations
7. Climate Smart Communities certification
8. LED streetlights
9. Benchmarking
10. Community campaigns
11. NYStretch energy code
12. County-hosted trainings
13. Community choice aggregation

Toolkits for each of the high-impact actions and additional resources can be found at

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Communities/How-It-Works/High-Impact-Action-Items>.

To earn the CEC designation and access to grant funding to support additional clean energy projects, local governments must complete four of the program's high-impact actions. Actions range in point value and requirements, and some cannot be completed by counties because of regulatory and practical limitations. Currently, 28 counties are Designated Clean Energy Communities. An additional 15 counties participate in the program but are not yet Designated CECs. High-impact actions that are popular among counties include PACE financing, clean energy upgrades, and county-hosted trainings.

PACE financing provides a low-cost, long-term alternative to traditional loans to fund clean energy projects in commercially owned buildings. To enable PACE financing, eligible municipalities must pass a local law and sign an agreement with the Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC).

Clean energy upgrades involve reporting and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from municipal buildings and facilities. To receive credit for this action, local governments must achieve a 10 percent reduction in GHG emissions from municipal buildings.

Counties can also earn points for hosting one or more NYSERDA trainings about managing responsible clean energy development. Counties are responsible for logistics, publicizing and promoting the training, and tracking attendance.

CEC Coordinators

Regional coordinators are available at no cost in every region of the state to help local leaders navigate through the Clean Energy Communities program. Clean Energy Communities Coordinators can help to identify and prioritize the most effective goals for your county based on specific community needs.

They can also offer support and guidance for accessing resources and grant funding opportunities. To connect with the CEC coordinators in your region, visit <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/clean-energy-communities/find-a-coordinator>.

Climate Smart Communities

One of the high-impact actions included in the CEC program is obtaining Climate Smart Communities certification. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program aims to guide and assist municipalities in their climate-related efforts. To participate and advance through the rating system, counties must pass the CSC pledge, appoint a staff or contracted coordinator, and complete actions related to the 10 pledge elements. Currently, nine counties are bronze certified, four are silver certified, and the gold level is under development. The program is jointly sponsored by six state agencies and primarily administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Climate Smart Actions

Counties and municipalities can achieve different levels of CSC certification by completing actions that earn points. Actions are categorized as “mandatory” or “priority” and fall into 12 buckets that correspond with the pledge elements. Certification actions span several areas related to climate change, including energy use, solid waste management, community resilience, and land use. Across the currently certified counties, actions with high levels of completion include entering a renewable energy power purchase agreement, creating or improving biking and walking infrastructure, and educating through social media.

Entering a power purchase agreement for renewables allows a municipality to provide renewable energy through a third party. Points for this action vary based on the number of renewable energy system installations. Participation reduces risks and costs while promoting and creating the potential for increased renewable energy adoption.

Creating or improving municipal infrastructure for biking and walking promotes low-cost, low-carbon means of transportation. Points for this action can be awarded for strategies like expanding and improving bike and walking paths and developing a bike share program.



Climate Smart Communities Pledge

1. Build a climate-smart community
2. Inventory emissions, set goals, and plan for climate action
3. Decrease energy use
4. Shift to clean, renewable energy
5. Use climate-smart materials management
6. Implement climate-smart land use
7. Enhance community resilience to climate change
8. Support a green innovation economy
9. Inform and inspire the public
10. Engage in an evolving process of climate action

Social media increases a municipality’s ability to reach audiences and spread information. Counties can earn points for this action by using at least one social media platform to inform the public about local government efforts and engage the community in accomplishing climate-related actions.

The CSC pledge, certification action checklist, and additional information can be found at climatesmart.ny.gov.

Coming Soon: CSC Coordinators

NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities Coordinators have historically provided technical assistance for CSC in addition to CEC. In April 2022, DEC announced that they are contracting with three regional partners to serve as first coordinators specifically for the Climate Smart Communities program. Using the CSC certification program as a roadmap, coordinators will provide technical support and strategic planning assistance to guide local governments in the development of successful local climate action initiatives.



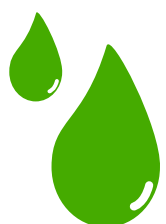
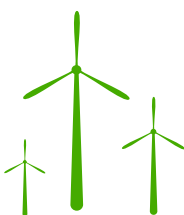
How are CEC + CSC related?

There are many ways in which the Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities programs overlap. Both programs are sponsored by NYSERDA, though NYSERDA is just one of the six sponsors of CSC and DEC acts as the main CSC administrator. Both programs are also available to all municipalities (counties, cities, towns, and villages) and have interactive websites where communities can track their progress and the progress being made by their peers.

Another way in which the programs are related is that CSC certification is a high-impact action under the CEC program. Both programs also include actions like installing LED streetlights, adopting a unified solar permit, and benchmarking. Counties can contact their regional CEC Coordinators for technical assistance with both programs, though CSC will soon have its own coordinators.

NYSAC recommends participating in both Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities to maximize the amount of guidance, technical assistance, and funding opportunities your county has access to.

A notable distinction between the programs is the types of grants available. The CEC Leadership Round provides grants to communities that have received CEC designation, earned a certain number of points, or are completing specific high-impact actions for which dedicated grant funding is available. No local cost share is required for CEC grant applications. The CSC grant program, in contrast, is also available to all counties, cities, towns, and villages, regardless of whether they are registered or certified CSCs; however, registered and certified CSCs receive additional points in the competitive scoring system. The CSC grant program also differs from CEC in that it requires a local match equal to 50 percent of the total eligible project costs.



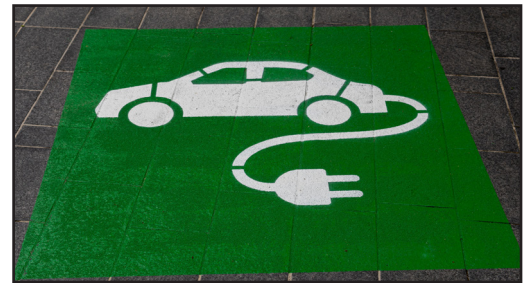
Additional Opportunities by Organization

In addition to Clean Energy Communities and Climate Smart Communities, there are many other state programs and grant opportunities available to support local climate action. This section provides an overview of the resources available through different state agencies and includes application deadlines where applicable.

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

Municipal Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Program

The Municipal ZEV Rebates and ZEV Infrastructure Grants, administered by DEC's Office of Climate Change, provide opportunities to finance ZEV-related purchases for municipal and public use. The Municipal ZEV Rebate is available to local governments that purchase or lease eligible new zero-emission vehicles for fleet use. The amount of the rebate is based on the range of the vehicle.



The Municipal ZEV Infrastructure Grant program provides grants to install hydrogen fuel filling station components and electric vehicle supply equipment that is primarily for public use. There is a 0-20 percent match requirement based, in part, on the median household income of the municipality.

The application periods for the vehicle rebate and infrastructure grants are currently closed. For updates on the availability of funding and to view the 2021 RFA, visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html#ZEV>.

Climate Smart Communities Grant Program

The Climate Smart Communities Grant Program offers competitive 50/50 matching grants that are available only to local governments. Funds are available for the implementation of projects related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (mainly outside the power sector) and climate change adaptation, as well as planning and assessment projects aligned with Climate Smart Communities certification actions. Participation in the Climate Smart Communities program is not a prerequisite for applying for grant funding.

For information on Round 6 of the CSC Grant Program, visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html#CSC>. Applications will be accepted until **4pm on Friday, July 29, 2022**.



Grants for Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Household Hazardous Waste Programs

To assist municipalities with several disposal-related projects, DEC offers six different grants under the following categories.

1. Waste Reduction/Prevention Projects
2. Recycling Capital Projects
3. Recycling Coordination and Education Projects
4. Household Hazardous Waste Projects
5. Municipal Landfill Closure Projects
6. Municipal Landfill Gas Management Projects

For more information about each of these opportunities, including application deadlines, visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/4776.html>.



Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Initiative

New York State is working to bolster food scrap recycling initiatives across all counties. Approximately \$2 million is available to support projects that create or expand food scrap recycling. Projects can either increase the amount of residential recycling or assist associated programs and facilities. Applications will be accepted until May 3, 2024. More information can be found on the DEC website at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8798.html>.

Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program

Projects that directly improve water quality or aquatic habitats or protect drinking water sources may be eligible for funding under DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project Program. At least \$75 million is available for eligible projects, including water treatment improvement projects, salt storage, land acquisition and source water protection, and nonagricultural nonpoint source abatement and control. Applications will be accepted until 4pm on July 29, 2022. More information is available at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html>.

Department of State (DOS)

Smart Growth Planning and Zoning Grant Program

Smart Growth is an approach to community planning and development that integrates what are known as the "3 Es" — economy, equity, and environment — with an emerging fourth "E" — energy. The Department of State administers a portion of the Smart Growth grant program, which is funded annually through the Environmental Protection Fund. The planning and zoning grant program funds comprehensive plans, area plans, and zoning ordinances to implement those plans. Plans must include the principles of Smart Growth, and there is also a heavy emphasis on clean energy siting.

Only towns, cities, and villages can pass comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, but the program is open to counties to administer on behalf of a municipality. To review this year's Request for Applications (RFA), visit <https://dos.ny.gov/funding-bid-opportunities>. Applications are due by 4pm on Friday, July 29, 2022.

Countywide Smart Growth/Resiliency Planning Grant Program

In 2018, DOS awarded Smart Growth grants to five counties — Albany, Genesee, Orange, Sullivan, and Tompkins — to develop countywide climate resiliency plans as part of a countywide resiliency planning pilot program. The final resiliency plans will include a countywide risk assessment, resilience strategies, and accompanying recovery projects and actions to address areas in the counties that have been most affected by past storm damages. The Department is still working with the five awardees to develop these plans and will evaluate whether to launch another round of the program.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program provides grants to communities to develop a community-driven plan with a vision for their waterfront, guided by several environmental policies that ensure that projects work in harmony with waterfront natural resources and ecosystems. While not directly a climate program, many of the activities that are eligible for funding relate directly to climate and flood risk, as well as resiliency. This includes funding for planning and the actual infrastructure to improve resiliency.

Similar to the Smart Growth program, a county can apply on behalf of the municipality to administer the LWRP grant. To review this year's Request for Applications (RFA), visit <https://dos.ny.gov/funding-bid-opportunities>. Applications are due by **4pm on Friday, July 29, 2022**.

Model Local Resilience Laws and Resilience Principles

The Resilience Unit at DOS has also developed model local laws and principles that communities can adopt to increase their resiliency. The Resilience Principles to help communities understand and apply resilience can be found at https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/08/resilienceprinciples_opd.pdf, and the model laws can be found at <https://dos.ny.gov/model-local-laws-increase-resilience>.

Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC)

Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)



The Green Innovation Grant Program annually offers competitive grants to projects that improve water quality and mitigate the effects of climate change. Counties are eligible to apply for grants under the categories of green stormwater infrastructure, water efficiency, and environmental innovation. Green stormwater infrastructure projects focus on stormwater reduction and treatment and can involve a host of practices, including bioretention, permeable pavement, and the establishment of riparian buffers. Water efficiency projects work to reduce water use across technologies and practices. Eligible projects should focus on water meters or water reuse. Environmental innovation projects are those that demonstrate new and/or innovative approaches to delivering services or managing water resources in a more sustainable way.

Details about funding and eligibility can be found on the EFC website at <https://efc.ny.gov/gigp>. Applications are accepted until **4pm on Friday, July 29, 2022**.

Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant

The Environmental Facilities Corporation also has funding available to support the initial planning of wastewater, sewer, and water quality projects. Grants of up to \$100,000 are available to prepare engineering reports, which are required for other EFC financing applications. All grants require a local match equal to 20 percent of the requested grant amount. Details are available on the EFC website at <https://efc.ny.gov/EPG/>. The deadline for applications is Friday, July 29, 2022 at 4pm.

NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)

Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Leadership Round

The CEC Leadership Round includes three types of grants: (1) designation grants, which are only available to communities that complete at least four high-impact actions; (2) points-based grants, which communities can apply for only after earning the required number of points; and (3) action grants, which are available to support the NYStretch Energy Code and Community Campaigns actions. No local cost share is required for CEC grant applications.



Once a community completes all stated requirements for a grant, NYSEDA will send an email to the community's representative who submitted the action item documentation. Grant applications are accepted through an online grant application portal at www.nyserda.ny.gov/cec.

New Construction (NC)-Commercial Program

NYSEDA also offers technical assistance and funding incentives to support the design, development, and construction of carbon neutral buildings through its NC-Commercial Program. Local governments are among the entities that are eligible to apply, and applicants whose projects are located in a disadvantaged community may be eligible for additional technical support. Applications will be accepted through February 15, 2023, or until funds are fully committed. For more information and to apply, visit https://portal.nyserda.ny.gov/CORE_Solicitation_Detail_Page?SolicitationId=a0rt000000FmXG4AAN.

Just Transition Site Reuse Planning Program

The Just Transition Site Reuse Planning Program is designed to provide site reuse planning and technical support services to local governments that are navigating power plant retirement and site reuse opportunities. NYSEDA will provide 100 percent of the site reuse planning costs (up to \$150,000) with no cost share required by the applicant. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis until August 5, 2024, or until funds are exhausted. To learn more, visit https://portal.nyserda.ny.gov/CORE_Solicitation_Detail_Page?SolicitationId=a0rt0000018tQ1hAAE&gl=1*11pqxy*_ga*MzYxOTA1NDk3LjE2NTQ2MTg1ODk.*_ga_DRYJB34TXH*MTY1NDg3OTUyMy4yLjEuMTY1NDg4Mjg1Mi4w.

Clean Energy Internship Program

NYSERDA is making up to \$2 million available for clean energy businesses and organizations, as well as counties and municipalities, to hire interns to perform meaningful work in the clean energy sector. NYSERDA will fund up to 90 percent of intern wages for organizations with up to 100 employees and 75 percent of intern wages for organizations with 101 or more employees.

Local government interns should focus on community education and projects rather than internal operations. Applications

will be accepted through December 30, 2024. To apply, visit https://portal.nyserdera.ny.gov/CORE_Solicitation_Detail_Page?SolicitationId=a0rt000000MdhViAAJ&_gl=1*1nx0vah*_ga*MzYxOTA1NDk3LjE2NTQ2MTg1ODk.*_ga_DRYJB34TXH*MTY1NDg3OTUyMy4yLjEuMTY1NDg4Mjg1Mi4w.



New York Truck Voucher Incentive Program (NYTVIP)

NYTVIP provides vouchers, or discounts, to fleets that purchase or lease medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission battery electric (BEV) or hydrogen fuel cell electric (FCEV) vehicles. Voucher amounts are based on a percentage of the incremental cost of the vehicle, which is the difference in cost between the zero-emission vehicle and a comparable diesel vehicle, up to a per-vehicle cap. As of April 2022, \$58.3 million was available for NYTVIP incentives. To learn more, visit <https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/All-Programs/Truck-Voucher-Program>.

Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Parks Program

OPRHP's Parks Program provides matching grants for the acquisition, development, and planning of parks and recreational facilities to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters, or structures for park, recreation, or conservation purposes and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects. Grants can fund up to 50 percent of the total eligible project cost (or up to 75 percent if the project is located in a high-poverty area). Applications are accepted until **4pm on July 29, 2022**. To learn more, visit <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/grant-programs.aspx>.



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