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Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs: *Working in Small or Rural Communities*

Lessons Learned *by* Communities *for* Communities

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WHAT IS IT?

Small and rural communities are the majority of the jurisdictions in the United States. They are home to up to 80 percent of the population in some states. These communities offer several unique opportunities for engaging residents in sustainability initiatives, as well as challenges related to funding, access, and capacity.

WHY DO IT?

- Small and rural communities may benefit from technical assistance for their programs.
- Environmental staff members (if they exist) may have multiple roles and resources, and may be spread thin.

WHAT WORKS?

- Listen to people where they gather (for example, in community centers, schools, libraries, churches). Become familiar with community values and needs.
- Work with local figures who can help deliver your message.
- Establish personal relationships with diverse stakeholders. Get to the point where you are broadly recognized by different stakeholder groups.
- Create opportunities for small jurisdictions to collaborate with larger cities and share their capacity and expertise.
- For multiple small jurisdictions, have a common contract for common services. Jointly procuring services or equipment can save resources compared to replicating the process across all jurisdictions.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- People may be uncomfortable collaborating with unfamiliar groups.
- Avoid strict geographic boundaries. Stay flexible to work where your message resonates.
- Plan well. News of poor planning and negative experiences can spread quickly.
- Be aware of concerns surrounding the use of taxpayers' money.

WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- California Center for Rural Policy: www.humboldt.edu/ccrp
- Small Town Energy Program: smalltownenergy.org/



“Use established community networks to spread information (e.g., Rotary, Chamber, churches, community organizations).”

Linda, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, Asheville, North Carolina

“Hold customized workshops or webinars specifically for small communities. Focus on the unique issues that they face.”

Small Cities Climate Action Partnership, El Cerrito, California