Cool Counties Policies and Programs Template

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Preface

Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Initiative

The threats of global climate change are now widely recognized as being among the most pressing issues facing us today. Recent statements by the world's scientific community affirm that there is no longer any doubt that human influences and activity play a major role in climate change.

Acting individually to address climate change will help, but we also must have a concerted, coordinated effort if we are to address this problem adequately. We as local governments may not regulate emissions from power plants, automobiles or even lawn and garden equipment, but we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to take aggressive steps to reduce our operational greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time leveraging our collective resources within our regions through the appropriate boards and committees. We also must recruit our state and federal partners to take similar actions.

The "Cool Counties" Initiative consists of two parts: A pledge on our part to take action and a plan to carry that out. The U.S. Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration serves as the pledge piece. The drafting of this declaration was led by King County, Washington, with input from the partners, including Fairfax County and the Sierra Club. Fairfax County took the lead on the operational planning guidance. The Cool Counties Policies and Programs Template provides a menu of policies and actions that local governments can use to help achieve the goals identified in the Cool Counties Declaration. The Template is still a work-in-progress, one that we envision turning over to our partners for development as a national best practices manual.

The Cool Counties Declaration consists of three key elements. The first asks county governments to commit to reducing their operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by first creating an inventory of their local emissions and then planning and implementing policies and programs to achieve significant, measurable and sustainable reductions.

The second element of the Declaration calls on local governments to work closely with their regional and state governments and others to reduce regional GHG emissions to 80 percent below current levels by 2050. The idea is to develop regional GHG emissions inventories and create regional implementation plans that establish short-, mid-, and long-term emissions reduction targets. The goal is to stop the increase in emissions by 2010, and to achieve average reductions of 10 percent every five years thereafter through to 2050.

The third element of the Declaration calls on counties to urge Congress and the Administration to enact a multi-sector national program of market-based limits and incentives for reducing GHG emissions to 80 percent below current levels by 2050, and to urge Congress and the Administration to strengthen standards by enacting legislation such as a Corporate Average Fuel Economy ("CAFE") standard that achieves at least 35 miles per gallon (mpg) within 10 years for cars and light trucks.

The Cool Counties Policies and Programs Template, the menu or tool kit of suggested policies and programs for implementation, is designed to provide counties guidance on developing their own greenhouse gas emissions reduction plans. The document is divided into seven solution areas that are common to all local governments. It is not expected that every county will implement all of the policies and/or actions within the template, just those that are most applicable to their situation. Bridging diverse local and regional interests requires a flexible initiative that allows different types of commitments for different counties. Each solution area contains policies, actions and strategies for achieving emissions reductions. While each jurisdiction's Cool Counties plan will be unique, at a minimum, the plans (either as a separate plan or a plan that is woven into a larger environment or land use plan) should specify how each county is addressing global climate change.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement provided a necessary catalyst to facilitate dialogue on this important environmental issue. Likewise, the Sierra Club's Cool Cities program was instrumental in recruiting cities from across the country to sign the agreement and develop solutions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels. To date, nearly 600 cities have accepted the challenge. Cool Counties will complement Cool Cities, but will be more rigorous and comprehensive.

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Planning Guide

Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Initiative

While every local jurisdiction's Cool Counties Climate Change Stabilization Plan will be unique, the four steps shown below can be used as a general guide in the development of a plan.

1. **Conduct a baseline emissions inventory**. Ideally, the inventory should be as comprehensive as possible. However, as a starting point, the local government could choose to begin by conducting an initial inventory on the energy efficiency solutions area in the template. The starting base year would be selected based upon the availability of reliable data (e.g., 2005). The inventory will provide a base emissions benchmark against which the county can measure future reductions and success.
2. **Adopt an emissions reduction target.** In the Cool Counties Declaration, individual counties pledge to "create an inventory of county government (operational) greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions and implement policies, programs and operations to achieve significant, measurable and sustainable reduction of those operational GHG emissions…" The county may elect to pass a resolution or adopt a policy to reduce energy consumption in county operated buildings by a specified percentage (e.g., 1% per year). The target would help guide the planning and implementation of solutions to achieve "significant, measurable and sustainable" reductions of county operational GHG emissions while supporting the regional goal of reducing emissions 80% below current levels by 2050.
3. **Develop and implement a Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Plan.** While every local jurisdiction's plan will be unique and based on specific circumstances of the county, at a minimum each plan should include policies, programs and operations that the local government will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve its emissions reduction target(s). An implementation plan may also include timelines, a description of financing mechanisms, and an assignment of responsibility to departments and staff. In addition, a successful plan should include a public outreach and education effort. Please see the Cool Counties Policies and Programs Template for a list of actions that local governments can implement.
4. **Monitor and verify results**. Monitoring and verifying progress on the implementation of policies, programs and operations to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions is an essential and ongoing process. Monitoring begins once actions are implemented and continues for the life of the action, providing important feedback that can be use to improve the action over time.

Additional planning guidance can be found through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website at www.epa.gov.

Cool Counties Policy Template[1]

Solution Areas

1. **Energy Efficiency**
2. **Renewable Energy**
3. **Fleets/Vehicles/Equipment**
4. **Land Use**
5. **Transportation**
6. **Education and Outreach**
7. **Water Conservation**

POLICIES Has your jurisdiction adopted policy to address the following? Check "yes" or "no" or "not applicable" for each of the following:			
4. Land Use Policies	**Yes**	**No**	**Not Applicable**
a. Promote mixed use development	☐	☐	☐
b. Promote transit-oriented development	☐	☐	☐
c. Promote tree preservation and tree planting efforts	☐	☐	☐
d. Establish tree cover goals	☐	☐	☐
e. Promote the protection and preservation of natural areas	☐	☐	☐

[1]The checklist is a tool to help you gauge your jurisdiction's current level of policies, programs and operations that can be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Further, the checklist can also assist you in plans for the future. The "not applicable" column is provided because not all programs and operations are applicable in all jurisdictions. Therefore, once the checklist is completed, the "nos" can assist you in identifying potential future priorities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in your jurisdiction and region.

Cool Counties Programs Template

Solution Areas

1. **Energy Efficiency**
2. **Renewable Energy**
3. **Fleets/Vehicles/Equipment**
4. **Land Use**
5. **Transportation**
6. **Education and Outreach**
7. **Water Conservation**

Programs & Operations

Has your jurisdiction adopted programs or operations to address the following? Check "yes" or "no" or "not applicable" for each of the following:

4. Land Use – Programs and Operations	Yes	No	Not Applicable
a. Incorporate language in county zoning ordinance and/or other applicable ordinance to support mixed use development (compact development incorporating a mix of residential, commercial, employment/office, and/or civic land uses)	☐	☐	☐
b. Incorporate language in county zoning ordinance and/or other applicable ordinance to support transit-oriented development (concentration of new development in proximity to transit facilities)	☐	☐	☐
c. Established minimum tree preservation and tree planting thresholds/requirements for new development and redevelopment projects	☐	☐	☐
d. Tree conservation program	☐	☐	☐
e. Protection and preservation of natural areas through land acquisition and/or acquisition of conservation easements. Examples include: purchase land for protection and passive recreation; partner with land trusts to acquire conservation easements for preservation and protection; acquire conservation easements through development process	☐	☐	☐