

PE7 Action: Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience

6 Points

BRONZE PRIORITY



SILVER PRIORITY

A. Why is this action important?

Local government decision makers often have the greatest capacity to influence the resiliency of their communities to climate change. Typically, they are the first to respond to emergencies and they understand the physical and social characteristics of their communities. With climate change bringing more extreme weather, local decision makers have the responsibility to examine vulnerabilities and take action to protect community assets. Some strategies utilized in local plans and projects may help to build a community's resilience to climate change, while others may fail to consider how climate change will affect their implementation. Sometimes slight modifications to existing policies or projects can help a community more effectively prepare for climate change.

Conducting an evaluation of existing plans, policies, and projects will expose gaps and vulnerabilities and ultimately help ensure that they will either help, reduce, or, at a minimum, not increase vulnerability. The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program developed a procedure to conduct such a survey: [Climate Smart Resiliency Planning](#). Climate Smart Resiliency Planning (CSRP) is a procedure for holding a facilitated discussion and completing a questionnaire that is designed to stimulate ideas and collaboration among local government staff and officials. Implementing CSRP is a great early step for local decision makers to make progress on climate change adaptation and creates an opportunity to integrate climate considerations into local government operations.

B. How to implement this action

Conduct a self-evaluation of local plans, policies, and projects using the [Climate Smart Resiliency Planning](#) procedure. This action can be accomplished as a standalone project or as part of another effort such as a climate action plan, a vulnerability assessment, a comprehensive plan, or climate adaptation plan. CSRP is designed to help municipal staff and officials work collaboratively to recognize the opportunities to enhance community resilience in existing plans and begin to create a set of integrated planning documents that identify vulnerabilities, assess risk, and describe appropriate adaptation strategies. Because it is focused on existing government policies and projects, CSRP is often one of the first steps in climate adaptation planning and should be followed by a climate vulnerability assessment, as per [PE7 Action: Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#).

To implement CSRP, put together a team to plan the effort and identify the most knowledgeable and relevant staff members that will contribute to the self-evaluation. A person should be appointed as a facilitator to elicit participation in discussions, oversee documentation of the CSRP process, and ensure that every question is answered. Although not necessary, local governments may find it useful to appoint someone not associated with the municipality to serve as the facilitator, e.g., a contractor who is familiar with the region and with climate change adaptation strategies, a knowledgeable volunteer from the CSC task force, or a [NYSERDA Clean Energy Community coordinator](#). Additionally, as the CSRP tool is primarily focused on flooding, communities may find it valuable during this process to explore other tools that directly address planning for hazards such as extreme heat and drought.

To be eligible for points under this CSC action, CSRP must have been implemented within five years of the application date. Applicants must follow the steps in the CSRP guide and fill out the [CSRP tool](#). The CSRP tool is the Excel spreadsheet that contains the questions and checklists for each of the six sections; it provides a place to take notes and identify gaps or deficiencies in local plans, policies, and projects. Applicants must also provide a summary report of the findings and show that they engaged municipal staff and officials across departments in the discussion of climate vulnerabilities as they relate to local plans, policies, and projects.

C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

The timeframe for this action largely depends on the size of the local government and the number of plans, policies, and projects that are evaluated as part of this process. A typical timeframe is one to three months. The costs are mainly related to staff time, although some local governments may choose to hire a contractor to act as a facilitator, document the process, and help produce the summary report.

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 or office that leads climate and sustainability efforts is most likely to be responsible for this action. This action is often led by the chief elected official's office or by the department of the environment or planning. Volunteer groups such as the CSC task force may assist, but detailed input from knowledgeable municipal staff and officials is necessary.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Six points are available for local governments that implement CSRP and provide the required documentation.

F. What to submit

Submit a copy of the completed CSRP tool and the summary report of the findings. At minimum, the summary report must describe the evaluation process (including a record of engaging municipal staff and officials across departments) and the gaps that were identified in local plans, policies, and projects as they relate to community vulnerability to climate change. The CSRP process must have been implemented within five years of the application date.

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

- [CSC Climate Smart Resiliency Planning – A Planning Evaluation Tool for New York State Communities](#)
- Piermont, NY [Climate Smart Resilience Planning: Results and Recommendations \(2014\)](#)
- [EPA Flood Resilience Checklist](#)
- [NOAA Coast Smart Community Scorecard](#)

H. Recertification Requirements

For recertification, local governments must provide updated CSRP documentation every five years that reflects any infrastructure changes or any new plans, policies, or projects that were not addressed in the initial report.