

Document Purpose

This document is designed to help those developing a Partners for Places (P4P) planning grant proposal understand what is typically involved in a sound community sustainability, climate action, and/or adaptation/resilience planning process. It should be used as a resource for the kinds of elements and best practices P4P is looking for when a planning process is proposed.

Introduction: The Basics of a Successful Planning Process

Because each community is dynamic and unique, P4P does not prescribe to its potential grantees how to create a community plan. Instead, there are basic planning elements the P4P Selection Committee looks for when they score planning proposals. These are broken into two broad categories:

- **Pre-planning, Governance, and Engagement.** This step includes items like: 1) securing political approvals; 2) gathering existing community data; and 3) developing an internal work plan - including items such as ideal planning-process governance structure, identifying key stakeholders to engage, and when to engage them. Key stakeholders should be a robust cross-section of residents, including people of color, people with low-incomes, and/or residents from immigrant or refugee communities. The elements of acceptance, collaborative ownership, active listening/response, inclusivity, transparency, accountability, and collective learning should be the foundation of the engagement process. Engagement strategies¹ should not be prescribed. Instead, stakeholders should be able to influence how outreach and engagement is conducted. An internal cross-departmental and local organizational team should ideally report to a diverse community-wide steering committee.
- **Plan Development, Evaluation Strategies, and Adoption:** A community vision (for sustainability/climate action/climate adaptation) should be identified. From this vision, terms should be defined, a timeframe/plan scale should be agreed upon, and realistic and attainable goals should emerge. Goals should have associated actions and a plan for implementation – including who is responsible, as well as the identification of possible funding sources. Data-driven metrics for measuring success should be associated with each action. The plan should outline regularly scheduled and transparent evaluation of each action. Finally, the plan should be formally adopted by a community governing body, such as a city council.

Please note that P4P recommends use of the STAR Community Rating System framework and indicators when designing a community plan. STAR's [planning guide](#) has examples of how communities have used the framework to shape their various plans. It is viewed as the most comprehensive system currently available for measuring community sustainability.

¹ Reference the Partners for Places *Community Engagement Guidance* document for additional resources on this process.

How to Propose: Urban Sustainability, Climate Mitigation, and Adaptation Planning

1) Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs). An ICSP is *any existing or new long-term plan, developed with community members, to help the community realize sustainability objectives within environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity.*²

- **State of the Practice.** ICSP is no longer a new field of practice. Online how-to guides abound, and should be referenced for tips. Proposers should look for ICSPs from communities of similar size, geography, and political persuasion, and borrow from those successful planning processes.
- **Develop Community Sustainability Targets.** ICSP plans focus on developing goals around the three pillars of sustainability: social equity, economy, and environment. ICSPs should be designed as companion plans to complement the overarching community comprehensive plan, and fit into the existing community planning structure.³
- **Key Proposal Element.** If choosing to propose this type of planning, the proposal should cite and footnote applicable resources⁴ and examples. ***Proposals should articulate a planning process that develops community sustainability goals in the areas of social equity, economy, and environment.***

2) Climate Action Plans (CAPs). CAPs are defined *as a set of strategies intended to guide efforts for climate change mitigation.*

- **State of the Practice.** Like ICSPs, CAP development is not new, and there are multiple online guides and examples.⁵ These guides should be applied flexibly, so communities can tailor a carbon mitigation strategy that makes sense for their own unique circumstances.⁶ CAPs differ from ICSPs by focusing on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from all sectors within the built environment (transportation, buildings, and waste, for example). In addition to the basic planning components outlined in the Introduction section of this document, CAPs should outline target emissions reduction goals and timeframes.
- **Develop Community GHG Reduction Targets.** Like ICSPs, CAPs should align with other community plans and goals. They include an inventory of existing GHG emissions, reduction goals/targets, and analyzed/prioritized reduction actions. Government and community-wide emission reduction strategies should be evaluated and selected to meet

² [Integrated Community Sustainability Planning – A Guide](#); The Natural Step

³ Over time, all traditional community plans, like transportation, community development, and land use, should promote sustainability. This means that the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO) should be an ally to the local sustainability director, providing guidance on what plans are scheduled to be updated when, and allowing them to participate in and influence each community plan as it is developed and updated.

⁴ [Integrated Community Sustainability Planning Tool](#); Royal Roads University

⁵ [ICLEI Climate Action Planning Archives](#); ICLEI USA

⁶ [Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning](#); Unhabitat for a Better Urban Future

these targets. This evaluation process should consider ways to achieve equitable distribution of costs and benefits across the community. Proposed strategies should be vetted and prioritized through an inclusive public process. CAPs also include implementation strategies. Each strategy should identify key stakeholders, timelines, and potential funding sources. A public reporting mechanism should be outlined, with a schedule for progress reporting. A multi-stakeholder process for taking corrective action (if emission-reduction goals are not being met) should ideally be outlined in the plan prior to formal adoption.

- **Key Proposal Element.** If choosing to propose this type of planning, the proposal should cite and footnote applicable resources⁷ and examples. *Proposals should articulate a planning process that develops community GHG reduction targets.*

3) Adaptation/Resilience Plans. Adaptation/resilience planning is the process of *comprehensively addressing local climate risks by analyzing, selecting, and prioritizing measures in response to climate change.*

- **State of the Practice.** Adaptation/resilience planning is not yet as established as ICSP and CAP planning. This emerging planning process⁸ also follows the basic planning principles of governance and engagement outlined in the Introduction section of this document. However, addressing climate risk is the emphasis of this kind of planning process.
- **Assess Community Climate Risk.** Adaptation/resilience planning for climate change can help a community: 1) embed adaptive measures into operations and processes; 2) identify, evaluate, and measure risk probability and severity; 3) engage in long-term risk management; 4) build partnerships for adaptation responses across departments and organizations, and 5) identify community expectations about service provision in acute and chronic stress situations.⁹ Adaptation/resilience planning includes: 1) data gathering and observation of climatic and non-climatic community variables; 2) assessment of climate impacts and vulnerability; 3) data-driven flexible implementation structures; and 4) monitoring and evaluation of adaptation actions. Resources to help communities design this process are increasing. ICLEI has created a [growing repository](#) that proposers should peruse.¹⁰ To manage current and future climate, communities may need to change asset allocations, resources, and local government operations.
- **Key Proposal Element.** If choosing to propose this type of planning, the proposal should cite relevant examples to the specific community. *Proposals should articulate a planning process that develops community strategies to address community climate risk.*

⁷ [Integrated Community Sustainability Planning Tool](#); Royal Roads University

⁸ [Essential Capacities for Urban Climate Adaptation: A Framework for Cities](#); Innovation Network for Communities

⁹ [Adaptation Planning](#); AdaptNSW

¹⁰ [Resilience Library](#); ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability