

GCoM USA – Regional and Metro-scale Climate Leaders

Introduction

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is an international alliance of cities and local governments with a shared long-term vision of promoting and supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and move to an inclusive, just, low emission, resilient society. There are currently 154 members of the GCoM in the US, all of whom have made a commitment to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change. The GCoM has been working in the USA with partners such as the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), ICLEI USA, C40 and others to help build a program that will help support US cities in their efforts on climate change. One key strategic objective which national stakeholders have identified is to help foster more metro-scale or regional ‘Climate Action Plans’, bringing together multiple local government entities and regional organizations to tackle the issues.

Although there are a number of organizations/partnerships working on climate change at metropolitan area and regional level, the traditional approach for cities and communities in the US to respond to climate change has been to do so at the scale of the administrative boundary of a municipal government. There are numerous examples in other regions of the world, especially the EU, where a more metropolitan or regional approach has been adopted. This approach offers several benefits:

- Fostering more ambitious and widespread action on climate change.
- Matching measurement and action to the scale of systems producing GHG emissions including transportation, waste, and renewable energy generation.
- Leveraging greater resources and collective efforts through multi-level governance.
- Creating economies of scale, such as with public procurement or shared consultant costs.
- Bundling efforts on Climate Action Plan preparation, implementation, and monitoring can resolve lack of human and financial resources for smaller municipalities.

One of the aims of the International Urban Cooperation North America (IUC NA) project is to help grow the GCoM initiative in the US. As part of this process, the project will support 4 US ‘regions’ or ‘metropolitan areas’ in joining the GCoM and responding to the reporting requirements. This will build upon the experience of counterpart regions from the EU Covenant of Mayors while testing the effectiveness of the approach in the US context.



Support Provided

IUC NA will support a range of activities for the pilot regions based on the following:

1. Workshop and Training

An initial workshop event for each region will be organised by the IUC NA team and associated contractors. This will be an opportunity for the successful regions to fully understand the requirements of GCoM and walk through the requirements to be developed through the cooperation. Experiences will be shared with staff and stakeholders from local administrations, utilities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Councils of Government, and State Governments. This workshop will build an initial understanding of how the cooperation will work and allocate the associated responsibilities.

Representatives from an EU CoM member region or EU ‘Covenant Territorial Coordinator’ may also attend the event to share its experiences in developing a successful regional Climate Action Plan.

2. Assistance with Compilation of GHG Inventories and Climate Action Plan

Technical expertise will be provided to help the region develop a Climate Action Plan. This work will be broken out into various segments and project experts will ‘hand hold’ local stakeholders through the process. Experts will assist the region with the following:

- a) Working with regional staff to identify key data which needs collecting;
- b) Compiling key data provided by regional stakeholders to create GHG inventory;
- c) Presentation and training of GHG inventory compilation;
- d) Facilitation of regional climate Risk and Vulnerability workshop;
- e) Compiling climate Risk and Vulnerability assessment;
- f) Facilitating climate change action workshop;
- g) Compiling and quantifying impact of climate actions;
- h) Review of Climate Action Plan (drafted by local staff).

Timescale

IUC NA plans to select 4 regions/metropolitan areas in spring 2019. Regions will sign an MOU agreement with IUC NA outlining the terms of the collaboration, which would run for about 15 months from spring 2019 to fall 2020. The process is envisioned to roll out approximately as follows:

- May 2019 – launch workshop
- June 2019 – beginning of technical support
- October 2019 – completion of regional GHG inventory and Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
- November 2019 – technical workshop to present GHG inventory to stakeholders and identify climate mitigation and adaptation measures



- February 2020 – completion of analysis/quantification of mitigation actions
- April 2020 – draft Climate Action Plan from region
- June 2020 – final Climate Action Plan published with an associated event to promote the plan
- September 2020 – project closure event and next steps

Requirements of the beneficiaries

Selected regions/metropolitan areas will commit to close collaboration with IUC NA with local organizations contributing ideally at least 1 FTE (potentially shared between various individuals and organizations) to cooperate with IUC NA staff and project experts in delivering the work. Local staff will support organisation of logistics and events, as well as assist in the collection of data and author a Climate Action Plan.

The region/metropolitan area will also need to appoint a 'lead organisation', on behalf of the region/metropolitan area, to adopt accountability of local activities and as a single contact point for the IUC NA team.

Key Outcomes

The goal of the project is to provide successful case studies of regions in the US working together to act on climate change and join the GCoM. The level of success will be measured based on the experience of the beneficiaries and stakeholders in implementing action on climate change as well as the quality of the data and Climate Action plan submitted to GCoM. Key performance indicators will be as follows:

1. A successful initial workshop with representation from the local governments; Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or Council of Governments (CoG); local utilities providers; technical experts and an EU CoM region.
2. A regional GHG inventory, compliant with GCoM requirements.
3. A climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, compliant with GCoM requirements.
4. A Climate Action Plan, compliant with GCoM requirements.
5. A successful project closure event where stakeholders reflect on the process and outline that the work will continue into the future (i.e. implementation of the Climate Action Plan).
6. A committed Covenant Territorial Coordinator (likely an MPO or CoG) willing to lead coordination of activities in the future.
7. A fully populated GCoM profile for the region with all data submitted and uploaded.
8. Investment mobilized by the region/metro-area to implement the measures in the Climate Action Plan.
9. The region is actively presenting the project and collaboration with GCoM/IUC at other public events.

