



Introducing the NCLM Green Challenge

Municipal officials are on the front lines of environmental protection and efforts to hold down energy costs. With so much scientific information and with energy costs rising almost daily, where should you begin? How do you organize your efforts? And how do you allocate limited resources?

To assist you with these questions, we offer the NCLM Green Challenge. We can work together to protect natural resources while saving energy and money. We can solve these challenges together, just as the North Carolina League of Municipalities has for a century, by sharing ideas and supporting one another.

The purpose of the NCLM Green Challenge is to encourage member cities and towns to implement short-term and long-range actions that will conserve resources and save money, thereby protecting the environment and operating municipal government in a more cost-effective, energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly manner. Change takes time, so the program will be organized in levels and implemented over the next three years.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Participating cities and towns choose practical actions that can save energy, money and natural resources. There are three levels to the Green Challenge, and a city or town will receive recognition for completing one or more levels. Special recognition may be given for exceptional accomplishments.

The first level includes five practical actions that a municipality can take, focused on commitment and planning. For each item, we provide a description and helpful resources or examples. We list an outcome that would provide proof of your implementation as we keep track of participation. The items of the first level fit under the broad categories of Policy Adoption and Energy Efficiency. Cities and towns with populations greater than 10,000 must complete three of the five suggested actions to achieve the first level. Those with populations under 10,000 must complete two.

Our Green Challenge is patterned after a similar program of the Virginia Municipal League and we appreciate the VML's willingness to share their good ideas.

If your city would like to take part in the Green Challenge, we ask that your board notify the League offices of your intent by September 1, 2008, along with any actions you have taken or will take on the five items in Level One. A sample ordinance for your board is included along with an Intention and Progress Survey that must be completed. All of the information, including the survey, is available on our website, www.nclm.org.

RECOGNITION

Your city will receive a plaque signifying its commitment. This plaque will be presented at the NCLM Centennial Conference in Charlotte, October 12–14. When your municipality achieves the intermediate or advanced level, additional recognition will be given.

Please read the additional information on the NCLM Green Challenge. I know that many of you already are implementing these energy-, resource- and cost-saving programs. I hope that each of you will take up the NCLM Green Challenge. Through this challenge, we can demonstrate our continuing commitment as dedicated stewards of the environment and fiscally responsible public servants.

Sincerely,

Mayor Pro Tem Susan Burgess, Charlotte
NCLM President

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P.S. To save paper, postage, fuel and other resources, we will be providing this information to you in electronic format. All information will also be available at www.nclm.org.





How the NCLM Green Challenge will work

FIRST LEVEL – All municipalities receive an information packet about the challenge. A city or town board passes a resolution to participate and complete a designated number of items from a list of five options. Municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 must complete three of the five options. Those with populations under 10,000 must complete two.

All cities and towns sending in the resolution and confirming completion of the required options will receive a plaque at the NCLM Annual Conference in October. There will be a special NCLM Green Challenge booth at conference for distribution of the plaques, as well as information about the challenge.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL AND ADVANCED LEVEL – After conference, cities and towns will receive another information packet with additional information on all levels of the challenge. Activities or steps will be outlined with points assigned for completion. Upon compilation of a specified number of points, a city or town will be able to achieve Intermediate and Advanced Level. For each level, the League would send out an addition to be placed on the original plaque. An additional option would be to award special recognition for very high achievement by a particular city or town or several (by population categories).

Also attached:

How your municipality can participate in the NCLM Green Challenge

Sample Ordinance

Intention and Progress Survey

First Level Steps

Possible Steps for Intermediate and Advanced Levels



How your municipality can participate

1. Sign Up.

1. Pass the enclosed resolution indicating that your governing board wants to participate. (All information is also available online at www.nclm.org.)

2. Complete the required number of steps.

2. *Municipalities with populations over 10,000 must complete three of the five.
Municipalities with populations under 10,000 must complete two of the five.*

3. Complete the enclosed Intention and Progress Survey and send it, along with the resolution, to NCLM **by Sept. 1, 2008**. You can fax these to 919-733-9519 or complete the Intention and Progress Survey online (see survey for details).

4. Once the League receives your municipality's survey form and resolution, you're enrolled in the NCLM Green Challenge. To mark your participation, your municipality will receive a special plaque. Pick up your Green Challenge plaque at the NCLM 2008 Annual Conference in Charlotte, Oct. 12–14 (the League's centennial celebration!).

If a representative from your city or town does not attend the conference, your plaque will be mailed out after Oct. 15, 2008.

5. After Oct. 15, additional information will be sent to you about Intermediate and Advanced steps of the Green Challenge as well as resources for implementing these. A points system will be established and those accumulating enough points will be awarded the Intermediate and Advanced Level Green Challenge certification. When your municipality reaches the Intermediate or advanced level and submits the requested verification, you will receive additional recognition. Special recognition may be given to exceptional accomplishments.



Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, the _____ wants to emphasize the benefits of energy conservation and conservation of other natural resources such as water;

WHEREAS, the _____ wants to demonstrate that conservation practices can be applied to the daily operations of municipal government and to infrastructure projects;

WHEREAS, the _____ seeks to find methods of service delivery and operations that conserve energy and resources, thus saving taxpayer dollars and protecting and preserving the environment;

WHEREAS, sound conservation practices can reduce government costs over the long-term;

WHEREAS, this government would lead by example to show the practicality and effectiveness of conservation practices;

WHEREAS, _____ seeks to encourage its citizens and its businesses to be stewards of the environment;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE _____ of _____ accepts the NCLM Green Challenge and pledges to work toward achieving the various levels of the challenge, indicating measures accomplished to save energy and other natural resources over the next three years.

Adopted by the _____ of the _____
this _____

Mayor's signature



Intention and Progress Survey

In order to share information with other cities by participating in the Green Challenge, please return the survey by fax to 919-733-9519 or by going online to www.nclm.org and complete the online version by September 1, 2008.

The (city/town/village) of _____ accepts the NCLM Green Challenge.

Contact person to whom Green Challenge materials should be sent:

Name _____ Title _____

Email _____ Phone _____ Fax _____

STAGE I

1. Formally adopted a sustainability plan, climate protection resolution or similar commitment by the governing body.

Yes, date: _____ No

2. Created an energy improvement plan (EIP).

Yes, date: _____ No

3. Registered with the EPA's Energy Star Challenge and use their tools or an equivalent system to conduct a baseline emissions inventory of your government facilities. See background materials.

Yes, date: _____ No

4. Conducted an energy audit of two or more of your government facilities and implemented at least one recommendation.

Yes, date: _____ No

5. Create a water conservation education program.

Yes, date: _____ No

If there is someone in your town who would be available to be contacted to act as a green resource to other municipalities, please give us their contact information.

Name _____ Title _____

Email _____ Phone _____



Level One

GOVERNMENT POLICY ADOPTION

1. Adopt a sustainability plan, climate protection resolution or similar commitment by the governing body

DESCRIPTION:

By adopting a sustainability plan, or a similar document to organize green initiatives, local governments can coordinate efforts that often cross departmental boundaries, gain input and buy-in from city staff and additional stakeholders, and track progress in order to ensure that goals are met. While each jurisdiction should create a plan that suits its particular situation, the development and adoption of the plan is an important exercise that can benefit municipalities of any size and lead to demonstrable results. Credit is also given for adoption of resolutions that are circulating nationally — or their equivalent — to promote responsible actions on climate protection through emissions reductions. While these resolutions are best coupled with plans for specific actions and policies, they represent a public commitment on behalf of the municipality and can be a positive first step.

EXAMPLES / LINKS OF SUSTAINABILITY PLANS (available at www.nclm.org):

City of Charlottesville, Va.: www.charlottesville.org

Arlington County, Mass.: www.arlingtonma.gov/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_Energy

Minneapolis, Minn.: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/

EXAMPLES OF CLIMATE RESOLUTIONS:

City of Charlotte, N.C., Climate Resolution Agreement: www.charmeck.nc.us/

Chapel Hill, N.C., Carbon Reduction Pledge: www.townofchapelhill.org/

Cool Counties: www.kingcounty.gov/exec/coolcounties

POTENTIAL FUTURE SUBMITTAL:

Provide copy of resolution



2. Create an energy improvement plan (EIP)

DESCRIPTION:

All local governments engage in planning — which can include land use, transportation, open/public spaces, historic preservation, etc. Increasingly, local governments are recognizing the value in developing plans regarding energy usage. An energy-efficient plan outlines the measures a jurisdiction has and will implement to become more energy efficient and reduce its energy consumption. To determine what types of energy-efficient measures will be implemented, the jurisdiction must first assess the current energy consumption of municipal-owned and leased facilities. It generally applies to retrofitting existing buildings and sets standards for new municipal facilities to incorporate energy-efficient and sustainable building techniques in their construction.

Implementing energy-efficient and conservation measures into daily operations are essential for reducing energy consumption. An energy improvement plan provides examples of energy-efficient measures that can be applied in areas such as lighting, temperature control, infrastructure, purchasing/procurement, renewable energy and alternative fuels. Employee awareness should be a fundamental part of the plan. By educating employees about the need for resource conservation and what they can do to make a difference, municipal facilities will become more energy efficient.

EXAMPLES/LINKS (available at www.nclm.org):

San Antonio, Texas, Energy Efficiency Plan
 Charlotte, N.C., Energy Improvement Plan
www.energync.net/efficiency/government.html

POTENTIAL FUTURE SUBMITTAL:

Executive Summary and Table of Contents pages of EIP

3. Register with the EPA's Energy Star Challenge and use their tools, or an equivalent system, to conduct a baseline emissions inventory of your government facilities. See background materials

DESCRIPTION:

Local government agencies spend more than \$10 billion a year on energy to provide public services and meet constituent needs — while grappling with tightening budgets. Yet nearly one-third of the energy used to run typical government buildings goes to waste. EPA provides local and state governments, as well as federal agencies, a proven energy management strategy and no-cost tools to save energy and money and demonstrate their environmental leadership. (From the Energy Star website below).

EXAMPLES / LINKS (available at www.nclm.org):

Information on EPA's Energy Star Challenge: www.energystar.gov/
 Track energy use and benchmark facilities using Portfolio Manager
 International Council for Local Environmental Initiative: www.iclei.org/
 Arlington's commitment to the Energy Star Challenge:
www.arlingtonma.gov/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_Energy/index

POTENTIAL FUTURE SUBMITTAL:

Copy of baseline emissions inventory findings



4. Conduct an energy audit of two or more of your government facilities and implement at least one recommendation

DESCRIPTION:

An energy audit gives a snapshot look at government facility energy use trends, consumption and potential opportunities to help better manage facilities. Such an audit evaluates energy consumption practices and provides an analysis that can be the foundation for continued business planning, especially in identifying areas for energy and cost savings within existing facilities.

The use of energy-saving performance contracting is becoming increasingly attractive to local governments. This is when a government or organization contracts with a private firm to assess and correct energy deficiencies — often with little or no actual cost to the locality as the long term energy savings offset the costs.

The State Energy Office is North Carolina's lead agency for energy programs and services and serves as the official source for energy information and assistance for consumers, businesses, government agencies, community colleges and schools and the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. This office has considerable information on performance contracting.

EXAMPLES / LINKS: (available at www.nclm.org)

U.S. Department of Energy: www.doe.gov/

N.C. State Energy Office: www.energync.net/

POTENTIAL FUTURE SUBMITTAL:

Provide percentage of buildings audited and a brief narrative of follow-up plans (1 paragraph)

5. Create a water conservation education program

DESCRIPTION:

Water is essential for municipalities and cannot be taken for granted. Education establishes a foundation for working together to secure and protect this vital natural resource. Understanding water's flow through our daily lives informs the debate about the cost and value of public investments in municipal water supplies. Individuals learn ways to conserve. Communities cooperate given the knowledge of their interdependence.

EXAMPLES / LINKS: (available at www.nclm.org)

American Water Works Association: www.awwa.org/

U.S. EPA Water Site: www.epa.gov/ow/

N.C. Governor's Water Conservation Resources: www.governor.state.nc.us/

POTENTIAL FUTURE SUBMITTAL:

Provide copy of plan



Possible steps for Intermediate and Advanced Levels

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Purchase electric power from renewable sources or install renewable energy technology (solar, wind or geothermal) for use in government facilities. The total of purchased renewable energy and onsite-produced renewable energy must equal at least 2.5% of the energy use of all government facilities.

Create a separate real estate classification and lower tax rate for buildings that are 30% more efficient than required by building code.

Develop a policy to utilize energy-efficient and dark sky-compliant outdoor light fixtures.

Establish an energy manager position/responsibility or management team within the government.

GREEN BUILDING

Establish a policy of LEED certification for all new government facilities.

Approve or build a LEED-certified government building or renovate an existing building to the LEED-certified level.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Implement an internal government program that reduces, reuses and recycles paper, plastic and other materials.

Establish a procurement policy of a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content for everyday office paper use (consistent with the current federal government policy).

Establish a community-wide recycling collection program.

VEHICLES

Adopt a "green fleet" policy that incorporates, at a minimum, the purchase of low-emitting, fuel-efficient vehicles for vehicle fleet replacement and the use of alternative fuels (biodiesel, natural gas, ethanol) in fleet operations.

LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION

Adopt land-use plans that allow higher-density development either near public transit nodes or in areas with existing infrastructure and encourage mixed-use communities.

Promote the use of permanent conservation easements on private property within your community and/or implement a permanent conservation easement on public land.

WATER / AIR QUALITY

Develop and implement a plan for tree preservation and planting.

Adopt an anti-idling policy for school/government fleet vehicles.



EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

Provide employee benefits for ride sharing, walking, biking or taking transit to work.

Adopt a policy that a minimum of 20% of the eligible workforce should participate in alternative work schedules or telework by 2010.

EDUCATION/COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Develop an employee education program on policies/practices relating to the environment and energy conservation.

Establish an advisory commission composed of local residents and business representatives to advise and assist the local governing board on policies and practices dealing with the environment and energy conservation.

Develop and implement an education program for the local community dealing with the environment and energy.

INNOVATION