

COMMUNITY ENERGY MANAGEMENT - BEST PRACTICES

Developing a Community Energy Management Program (Strategy)

The following ten steps are a simple guide for communities that are early in the process of completing the Community Energy Management - Best Practices Checklist, and provide an at-a-glance pathway for Michigan local governments to begin discussing energy needs and goals and establish a Community Energy Management program. Many of these steps can be rearranged and/or completed simultaneously based on the needs of the community.

Step 1: Hire/Designate a Dedicated Community Energy Manager

The Community Energy Manager (CEM), which may be an individual or an organization serving in this role, is the community's primary resource on energy issues. With the support of community leadership and in coordination with municipal departments and staff, the CEM will lead the development and implementation of the Community Energy Management program and provide guidance on the development of related local energy policies. The CEM will also serve as a champion and information resource for energy projects and programs within the community. A sample CEM position description can be found [here](#).

*Best Practice Five: Community Energy Management
5.2 Community Energy Management*

Step 2: Begin the Discussion

The Community Energy Manager will introduce and discuss energy topics, including energy efficiency and renewable energy, with municipal departments and leaders to identify local energy priorities and gain necessary support for program development and project implementation. The CEM will work to identify and engage other energy champions within local government and the broader community, and invite feedback from a diverse set of community stakeholders and neighboring communities. These discussions will be helpful in identifying goals, opportunities, success stories, and lessons learned, and will inform the development of both the municipal energy management program and other community energy projects. Opportunities for input and outcomes of participation should be communicated in a consistent and transparent manner.

*Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach
Sec 1.2 Public Participation*

Step 3: Secure Support of Community Leaders

Leadership from elected officials and municipal administration is essential for program success and provides a clear signal to staff across departments to become fully engaged. A resolution adoption process articulating local clean energy goals, such as support for energy efficiency and renewable energy, sets the stage for Community Energy Management and demonstrates buy-in at the leadership level. Local energy champions can provide guidance to community leaders during this process. Elected officials and top administration are more likely to support energy efficiency and renewable energy projects if they know they have strong support from the public.

*Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach
Sec 1.1 Energy Plan*

Step 4: Develop a Guiding Policy that Supports Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy goals and recommendations in a dedicated section of the Master Plan or a separately adopted *Energy Plan*. Integrate the clean energy strategies with other components of the Master Plan and other sustainability policies, if applicable. Development of a local energy policy supports the advancement of energy efficiency

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and renewable energy within the community by establishing clear goals and providing a framework for development. Language in planning documents that supports energy management and implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects serves as guidance for project development, capital investment, land use regulation, and economic strategies.

Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach
Sec 1.1 Energy Plan

Step 5: Update Zoning Code Language

Review and update zoning regulations to reflect the adopted energy policy. The regulations need to be user-friendly and accessible online. Provide clear guidance in your zoning code about how energy efficiency and renewable energy installations are to be integrated into your community. Zoning impacts building energy efficiency, transportation efficiency, renewable energy installations, and municipal infrastructure.

Best Practice Two: Zoning Regulations
2.1 Zoning Regulations

Step 6: Create an Easy-To-Use Permitting / Project Approval Process

The zoning ordinance needs to include an easy permitting, review, and approval process. Common information and language helps all parties involved complete an efficient and successful energy project. Streamline procedures and provide a clear review process. A qualified intake professional that is knowledgeable about energy efficiency and renewable energy is critical in articulating the community's goals and enabling successful projects.

Best Practice Three: Project Review Process
3.1 Project Review Policy and Procedures

Step 7: Provide Easy Access to Information

Easy access to relevant information resources and contacts helps interested property owners and installers understand local expectations and plan projects appropriately. Encourage local clean energy projects by providing access to summary information on various technologies and sharing examples/case studies of successful projects. A *Community Energy Webpage* is the central hub for ongoing engagement with the public and information helpful to those interested in clean energy. Online and printed materials detail how energy efficiency and renewable energy works and the process projects managed in your community.

Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach
1.2 Public Participation

Best Practice Three: Project Review Process

3.2 Guide to Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Projects

Best Practice Six: Community Prosperity
6.2 Marketing and Promotion

Step 8: Educate Local Officials and Train Staff

Local leaders and staff may not know much about the value of Community Energy Management, energy efficiency, or renewables, or understand the community's process for enabling successful energy projects and developments. Orientation for local elected and appointed officials helps inform and empower them to champion local clean energy initiatives. Increasing staff familiarity with energy efficiency and renewable energy technology and installations will help make the permitting process more efficient. Create an orientation packet

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for local officials that assists them in understanding the value of Community Energy Management and which helps them share information with the interested public. Identify training for staff with formalized expectations to integrate clean energy into all municipal operations.

Best Practice Four: Recruitment and Education

4.1 Recruitment and Orientation

4.2 Education and Training

Step 9: Establish Energy Targets and Metrics

Based on the broad goals set in the *Energy Plan*, set annual targets and develop metrics to regularly track the progress on improvement activities. Energy efficiency and renewable energy targets establish and help maintain momentum, and metrics verify that measures perform as expected and serve as documentation of project success. Prioritize actions and sites in the annual *Action Plan* to focus the community's limited resources on projects that may have the highest impact or the greatest opportunity for increasing public awareness.

Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach

1.1 Energy Plan

Best Practice Five: Community Energy Management

5.1 Clean Energy Sites

5.2 Community Energy Management

Step 10: Manage & Promote Local Clean Energy

Identify priority sites, facilitate energy projects, promote outcomes, and leverage local business development opportunities to advance local clean energy. All sites within the community have energy efficiency and renewable energy potential including existing developments. Provide guidance and leadership to the surrounding community on energy issues. Increase public awareness of the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy. Work with local economic development efforts to expand local business and create jobs in support of increasing local clean energy.

Best Practice Five: Community Energy Management

5.1 Clean Energy Sites

5.2 Community Energy Management

Best Practice Six: Community Prosperity

6.1 Economic Development Strategy

6.2 Marketing and Promotion