

Alaska Communities Climate Action Planning

A Cohort Proposal

March 17, 2020

As the impacts of climate change are being felt much more severely in Alaska than in the lower 48, it is no surprise that so many local leaders and the communities they serve are stepping up to address both the causes and impacts of the climate crisis. The proposal that follows outlines a possible support structure that will allow diverse communities in Alaska to move through their planning efforts in a way that is cost effective and efficient, and results in actionable, community-based climate plans. This cohort structure is designed to allow individual communities to chart their own unique course while taking advantage of the efficiencies and personal support that comes from working with others in a cohort.

Community Participation

The cohort would be made up of mid-sized communities that serve as hubs for surrounding areas in Alaska. This allows smaller neighboring communities to learn from the plans of the larger communities in the region, creating a long-term synergy and strengthening community relationships. These communities will be starting at various parts of the process given that many communities have already done some, if not quite a lot, of climate work already.

Structure

Fundraising efforts (philanthropic sources, State/Federal government, and industry donations) would be implemented to supply each community with the following:

- Some amount of funding (likely \$10-\$15k) for communities to support the local work of participating in the process
- A technical services budget (likely \$30-\$40k for communities working on comprehensive climate plans that address both mitigation and adaptation, \$15 - \$20K for communities working on climate plans that address only one). This budget can be used to secure specific support services (see below) with Geos Institute (adaptation), Lotus Engineering and Sustainability (mitigation), and/or SNAP (climate projections).
- Annual Subscription to Climate Ready Communities (www.climatereadycommunities.org)
- Greenhouse gas assessment and mitigation tracking program from Lotus Engineering and Sustainability (www.lotussustainability.com)
- Monthly video calls that include presentations from experts (most if not all Alaska-based) on climate resilience topics of interest to the cohort communities, progress check ins, and coordination of support elements when appropriate. Through this monthly process, Geos Institute will connect cohort communities with the federal, state,

and university programs in the state that are listed in the Toolkit developed in Anchorage and can offer assistance for community climate planning.

Support Organizations

The core team of Support Organizations would include University of Alaska-Anchorage, University of Alaska-Fairbanks (Scenarios Network for Alaska and Arctic Planning), Geos Institute, and Lotus Engineering and Sustainability.

Support Services

Cohort communities would be able to access the following services with their Technical Support budgets:

University of Alaska-Anchorage: One-on-one consultation for subject matter expertise in specific sectors (e.g. health impacts, food systems, transportation, energy). Consultation and assistance with external grant writing for project implementation.

University of Alaska-Fairbanks (Scenarios Network for Alaska and Arctic Planning): Local climate change projections to serve as the foundation for adaptation and resilience planning, training on how to use the data and projections, one-on-one consultation

Geos Institute: Adaptation workshop facilitation and/or training, community engagement training (focused on adaptation and equity), adaptation strategy menu, assistance with report writing, one-on-one consultation regarding adaptation and resilience planning

Lotus Engineering and Sustainability: Greenhouse gas emissions inventories and scenario modeling, GHG reduction strategies, carbon sequestration emissions accounting, mitigation workshop facilitation and/or training, workshop facilitation, community engagement training (focused on mitigation and equity), assistance with plan writing, one-on-one consultation regarding mitigation planning

While the initial structure focuses on climate planning, it is designed to be extended to continue to support cohort communities as they implement the plans they develop in this first stage, potentially while a new cohort begins the planning phase.

Benefits

- Builds on local knowledge of residents regarding the values of the community and the impact of climate change on those values
- Allows each community to access high quality planning assistance and one-on-one support without the costs associated with completing a process like this entirely on their own

- Creates actionable climate plans that are community-based, complete, and ready for implementation within 12-16 months
- Develops and/or strengthens relationships between local leaders and communities
- Provides personal support to help process leaders in each community effectively deal with the emotional toll that working on climate change takes
- Meets existing efforts where they are and helps cohort communities move forward by providing only what the communities themselves determine they need
- Strengthens local adaptive capacity and trains local leaders to be able to update their plans going forward with little outside help at a reasonable cost
- Keeps cohort communities together through at least the first phase of implementation to ensure that they are moving forward toward their goals
- Allows participants to leverage their technical support budget. For example, if multiple communities want workshop facilitation training, they could all receive that training at the same time for a fraction of what it would cost any one community by themselves.

Next Steps

If this cohort proposal, in its current form or revised, appeals to your community, the next steps will be to secure support from your local governing council to commit to the project contingent on funding being secured. Once the cohort communities are identified, we would work together to finalize a budget and begin fundraising.

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