

# Local Government Energy Efficiency

## Best Practices

### CLIMATE PLANNING

#### City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County

San Francisco Bay Area  
Population: 718,500

#### SUMMARY

From 2006 through 2008, the City and County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) and the County collaborated with cities to develop a San Mateo County Energy Strategy.

RICAPS was developed by C/CAG to benefit cities in San Mateo County. It is a set of climate action planning tools to minimize the time, effort, and cost to develop and monitor a Climate Action Plan (CAP).

RICAPS was developed to meet the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's CEQA guidelines for a Qualified Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy, consistent with state GHG reduction goals defined in AB 32.

C/CAG believes that these concepts are essential to the development of successful CAPs:

1. Quantifiable measures.
2. Appropriate "levels of accountability."
3. Annual tracking of measures.

# RICAPS

Regionally Integrated Climate Action Planning Suite

#### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

RICAPS benefits include:

- The cities within San Mateo County agreed to use the same set of tools in order to create a higher level of regional consistency both in terms of CAP policy and methodology. Data can easily be rolled up to be evaluated on the county level.
- The Multi-city Working Group model enables cities to learn from each other as they move through the process of developing a CAP. This will lead to increased collaboration and sharing of resources across regions.
- Climate Action Plans (CAP) are institutionalized and tracked over time. If anticipated progress is not made, cities will be prompted to make adjustments to get back on track.
- RICAPS is flexible; the suite is helpful to cities whether they're starting at square one or they already have a CAP and want to track their progress over time.

The RICAPS tools consist of the following:

- Users Guide
- Climate Action Plan Template
- Proposed Measures Including Calculations and Selection Guide
- Online Forecasting, Targeting, Calculating, and Tracking Tool
- Central Database Contracting
- Technical Support



# Climate Action Planning

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Monthly Multi-City Working Group meetings with the participating local agencies have been very effective. The sessions are educational and interactive. Representatives enjoy learning how each is approaching the CAP process. The pace of the meetings is keeping the pressure on cities to continue moving forward.
- So far, RICAPS has been funded by two grants along with matching funds from C/CAG. It is difficult to promise completed CAPs as a grant deliverable. Unforeseen circumstances beyond participants' control can prevent the CAP from being finalized and adopted within the grant timeframe, despite dedicated efforts.
- A first step in using the online tool is formatting and uploading 2005 baseline GHG inventory data. City sustainability coordinators have found that it is a good investment of time to coordinate with facilities staff and to take a close look at utility bills during this process. Many have already found savings as they uncover unnecessary or misdirected expenses.
- The Air Resources Board's Local Government Operations Protocol categories used for the GHG inventories do not align neatly with the way cities collect resource usage data. Since cities using RICAPS are committing to ongoing measurement and tracking of data, it makes sense for staff to figure out a countywide standard system for local agencies to collect data moving forward.

## THE REST OF THE STORY

The City and County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) supports the 20 cities in San Mateo County and the County on a variety of programs, including: congestion management, storm-water, countywide transportation planning, solid waste planning, local roads and, beginning in 2008, energy efficiency and climate action. San Mateo County Energy Watch is a partnership between C/CAG and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E).

From 2006 through 2008, C/CAG and the County collaborated with cities to develop a San Mateo County Energy Strategy. In 2008 and 2009, C/CAG provided funding to the all of the cities and the County to complete greenhouse gas (GHG) emission inventories for their government operations and provided funding to County staff to complete community-scale emissions inventories with technical support from ICLEI.

Grant funding from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) supported the adoption of the San Mateo County Energy Strategy by every city in San Mateo County, and the completion of government operations and community-scale GHG emission inventories for every city in San Mateo County.

*“Some climate action plans are based on estimates of estimates and models, so they are more like Aesop’s Fables. In contrast, RICAPS is quantifiable and consistent, and gets cities and counties to commit to measuring their progress year after year.”*

*– Richard Napier*

*Executive Director, C/CAG*

Five of the larger cities in San Mateo County have completed Climate Action Plans (CAP), each spending between \$75,000 and \$125,000 with consultants. Most of the cities in the county, especially in current economic conditions, cannot afford to develop a climate action plan. To overcome this problem, County staff approached BAAQMD for funding to complete a CAP template and Excel-based calculation tool specific to San Mateo County. PG&E provided financial assistance to develop a CAP tracking system and to allow cities in San Mateo County to complete the energy efficiency chapter of individual city CAPs. [> more...](#)

## RICAPS

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This project is known as the Regionally Integrated Climate Action Suite (RICAPS), and is anticipated to save the cities in San Mateo County upwards of \$1.5M collectively.

Three main concepts that C/CAG and County staff believe are essential to the development of successful CAPs are:

1. Every implementation measure must be quantifiable. The RICAPS measures are all based on some variable that can be tracked and reviewed on an ongoing basis. For instance, the residential solar measure requires that a city track the number of installed kilowatts (kW) every year towards its goal.
2. “Levels of Accountability.” One of the greatest challenges to effective Climate Action is a local agency adopting a measure for which they have little or no control and, therefore, little chance of successfully accomplishing. For example, a city should not adopt a measure aimed at reducing freeway traffic congestion.
3. Countywide transportation emissions are better addressed by C/CAG, the congestion management agency in San Mateo County, which has already funded programs intended to reduce emissions. C/CAG believes that transportation models are outstanding planning tools yet, because they are based on economic trends and projections, they lack some ability to track actual outcomes year-to-year. After discussions with the BAAQMD, C/CAG plans to track multiple data sources as indicators, including countywide fuel sales.

### LEARN MORE

To download the RICAPS documents and learn more about the RICAPS Multi-City Working Group, visit: [www.smcenergywatch.com/countywide\\_climate\\_action.shtml](http://www.smcenergywatch.com/countywide_climate_action.shtml)

For more information, contact:

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### CEQA Implications

RICAPS is a guidance document or tool so it has no environmental review requirement. However, a completed CAP using RICAPS that meets CEQA requirements for a “qualified greenhouse gas reduction strategy” (Qualified CAP) does have an environmental review requirement.

If a local agency is completing a Qualified CAP along with a general plan update, then the EIR for the general plan will include the CAP. If an agency is completing a Qualified CAP using RICAPS without a general plan update, it will likely plan to complete its own environmental review. Most local agencies in this situation have completed initial studies and negative declarations, although requirements may change in the near future. Every agency needs to do its own legal assessment.

C/CAG plans to complete a Climate Action Plan for transportation-related GHG emission reductions in San Mateo County and will complete an environmental review process that includes a description of the RICAPS “package” with details about how it was developed, suggesting that the cities in San Mateo County use RICAPS as a way to create regional collaboration on climate action. When individual cities or the County complete CAPs, they can mention C/CAG’s CAP for transportation and its environmental review to help tie their CAP to a regional effort.

C/CAG plans to make it easy for cities to “tier” off its Qualified CAP by developing a compliance list template. That way, a contractor or developer could fill out the compliance list to tier off of the GHG emission reduction plan requirement of the environmental review process for the project. C/CAG intends to write a template for whatever documents are required.

# Local Government BEST PRACTICES

## SIMILAR PROGRAMS

### ■ AMBAG Regional Inventory

**Collaborative** - Recognizing the need for more support with local climate change efforts, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments designed a program to yield the following results:

- completion of local government operations greenhouse gas inventories in 100% of AMBAG jurisdictions at NO COST to the municipal governments;
- capacity-building for jurisdictional staff;
- community capacity-building in the field of climate change mitigation; and
- standardized greenhouse gas inventories for regional comparability.

■ **SANDAG Energy Roadmaps** - The San Diego Association of Governments' Energy Roadmap Program provides free energy assessments and energy management plans, or “energy roadmaps,” to SANDAG member agencies. Energy assessments are available for any site at which a jurisdiction pays a San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) utility bill. Each Roadmap identifies ways a jurisdiction can save energy in government operations, and save energy in the community.

*Twelve cities in San Mateo County are actively using RICAPS to develop a CAP. Five local governments with existing CAPs intend to use the RICAPS online tool to track their CAP progress over time.*

For more information about this case study:  
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Funded by California utility ratepayers and administered by California's investor owned utilities under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.

## Climate Planning

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

■ **CoolCalifornia.org**- The website provides a Local Government Toolkit to identify cost saving actions, financial resources, and case studies to assist local governments with achieving GHG emission reductions.

[www.coolcalifornia.org/local-government](http://www.coolcalifornia.org/local-government)

■ **ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability** offers a suite of resources to aid local governments in implementing energy efficiency measures and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[www.californiasec.org](http://www.californiasec.org)

■ **The Institute for Local Government's Climate Change Program** provides resources, information, and recognition to help local agencies reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save energy.

[www.ca-ilg.org/ClimateChange](http://www.ca-ilg.org/ClimateChange)

■ **The Local Government Commission** provides many free resources to assist local governments in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy use including newsletters and publications, fact sheets, model projects, and articles.

[www.lgc.org/SEEC](http://www.lgc.org/SEEC)

**Investor owned utilities** offer incentives and other assistance to local governments.

**PG&E:** [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com)

**SDG&E:** [www.sdge.com](http://www.sdge.com)

**Southern CA Edison:** [www.sce.com](http://www.sce.com)

**Southern CA Gas:** [www.socalgas.com](http://www.socalgas.com)

Check with your municipal utility for similar programs.