

What is CivicSpark?

CivicSpark is Governor Brown's Initiative AmeriCorps program dedicated to **building capacity for local governments to address climate change**. CivicSpark is managed by the Local Government Commission in partnership with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

"Climate change is a global challenge that requires strong, sustained local action. This program gets young people into the communities across California to help reduce emissions and boost energy efficiency."

California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

CivicSpark fellows serve for 11 months, implementing important climate change mitigation and adaptation projects throughout the state of California. Fellows have the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the sustainability field, build professional skills, and develop a strong network while creating a lasting difference in local communities.

Our Model



Gap Assessments

Fellow interviews staff and reviews key documents to determine current climate change needs and to finalize the project scope.



Volunteer Engagement

In parallel with their service project, the fellow supports increased volunteerism for climate action in the region.



Service Projects

Based on the gap assessment results, the fellow implements a specific research, planning, or implementation project.



Transitioning Expertise

Each service year concludes with the fellow providing training to staff and/or by sharing results with key stakeholders to sustain progress.

Partner with CivicSpark

CivicSpark creates a delivery mechanism and infrastructure for meaningful and productive community partnerships to tackle climate change at the local level. CivicSpark fellows are college graduates with environmental degrees and relevant experience, who can assist state agencies to work more closely with communities on climate change. Embedded in local and regional offices, fellows provide an exceptional means to gather insight into what works and what needs to change in order for state policy to reduce GHG emissions more effectively.



State agencies can collaborate with CivicSpark to improve engagement with local governments and communities by:

1. Sponsoring a CivicSpark fellow, particularly in California's traditionally underserved regions, to advance state initiatives.
2. Using CivicSpark fellows to enhance communication and collaboration with local governments and communities, and to share information and gather input on local programs and activities.
3. Dispersing specific resources and tools through CivicSpark fellows to reach the communities they serve directly.
4. Supporting GHG emissions reduction and climate adaptation and preparedness to realize the goals of Governor Brown's Executive Order B-30-15, which establishes the most ambitious GHG reduction target in North America.

How to Get Started

CivicSpark operates out of 8 regional hubs. Each team includes 3-7 CivicSpark fellows selected through a highly competitive, national application process, and a part-time experienced coordinator who provides 1,000 hours of team training and supervision and acts as a local liaison, project advisor and mentor. Each fellow serves for 1,700 hours with 1,300 of these hours dedicated to implementing projects. **State agencies can contract directly with LGC** for CivicSpark fellows to support projects and programs with a local government connection.

Eligibility

All projects must provide direct benefit to specific local government agencies, and CivicSpark can only serve those agencies that demonstrate a “capacity need,” which is defined as the **absence of at least one** of the following elements:

- A full-time dedicated sustainability staff.
- A formally adopted Climate Action Plan.
- Specific formal mechanisms to annually track and report on climate-action progress.
- All projects must be a minimum of 200 hours.

Statewide, at least 50% of CivicSpark’s participating local government beneficiaries must demonstrate high need, which is an unemployment above the state average of 6.3%, a net increase in community energy use over the previous year, local government employment below 2007 levels, or a CalEnviroScreen score in the top 2/3 statewide.

2016-17 Service Year Calendar

March 15, 2016

Call for proposals is open. LGC staff talk with potential partners about interest and opportunities for engagement.

July 1, 2016

Priority application deadline to submit initial basic application.

October 1, 2016

Target date for all service agreements to be signed.

Early October

Fellow orientation takes place.

Mid October

Local projects get underway.

Application and Startup Process



1. To apply, state agencies need to complete an **initial project application** that includes a description of desired projects, the timing for implementation, contacts, and key information about the local governments the project will serve. LGC staff then contact you to discuss the proposed project and to ensure that it is suitable for CivicSpark.
2. The project partner and LGC complete a **service agreement** that outlines the terms, costs, and basic project scope (LGC has a template for use).
3. LGC staff share a “**pre-service capacity assessment survey**” with the participating local government staff to get a baseline and to define the local government’s specific project goals.
4. CivicSpark fellows start to work directly on the project with a high-level **gap assessment** in which they review key documents from the local government and interview staff contacts to review the goals outlined in the capacity survey and define the volunteer engagement and transitional strategies to utilize during project implementation.

Project Costing

CivicSpark is funded in part by the Corporation for National and Community Service, however, participation in CivicSpark requires a fiscal contribution from project partners. Projects are defined for a fixed term that allows the fellows to dedicate their attention and time to a specific project. The chart below describes pricing for projects of differing sizes, duration, and associated resources.

	3 months (325 project hours)	6 months (650 project hours)	11 months (1,300 project hours)
Cost	\$6,500	\$12,350	\$23,400
Rate	\$20/hour	\$19/hour (5% discount)	\$18/hour (10% discount)
Additional Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-20 additional project-prep hours • Up to \$100 in project-related travel covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-40 additional project-prep hours • Up to \$200 in project-related travel covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40-80 additional project-prep hours • Up to \$400 in project-related travel covered

Our Impact

CivicSpark's inaugural cohort of fellows (2014-15) provided over **62,000 hours of service** to California's communities, implementing 37 targeted projects to support 88 local government agencies, 50% of which are "high-need" communities, and reaching over **2,500 community members**. CivicSpark fellows supported a wide range of actions - developing, conducting, and organizing:

- 8 climate or energy action plans
- 100 energy assessment reports
- 17 climate action policies
- 10 vulnerability assessments
- 12 greenhouse gas inventories
- 31 community workshops
- 4 energy benchmarking assessments



The program leveraged **\$1 million in local matching funds** statewide, and received 5 applications for each open position in year one and over 6 applications per position in year two.

"Without CivicSpark, our City would not be able to effectively implement our Climate Action Plan."

Central Coast Project Partner

State Agency Project Partners

California Air Resources Board

For the 2015-16 service year, ARB is supporting 1 fellow who is tracking how municipal governments in the San Joaquin Valley are responding to SB 375 and AB 32 requirements by forming an advisory group, creating a database of information collected, and developing a report on missing information and next steps to be considered for statewide database expansion.

High Speed Rail Authority

For the 2015-16 service year, HSR is supporting 1 fellow who is working on identifying specific climate risks and performing a quantitative assessment of the impacts on HSR assets and future operations. The fellow will develop a list of system-wide and asset-specific adaptation strategies, and work with FresnoCOG member jurisdictions to improve their knowledge of climate vulnerability and how it can be addressed.

Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)

In the 2014-15 service year, BCDC directly supported 3 fellows who supported the "resilient shorelines" initiative in Contra Costa County and San Rafael, as well as analyzed regional shoreline vulnerability around the Bay.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFIRE)

In the 2014-15 service year, CalFIRE worked with the California Urban Forest Council and LGC to fund technical assistance for the Central Valley. Fellows provided educational outreach and free direct support to local government agencies to enable greater engagement with GHG Reduction Fund Urban Forestry grants.

Contact

Kif Scheuer

Climate Change Program Director
Local Government Commission
kscheuer@lgc.org | 415-717-4809

Michael McCormick

Senior Planner
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
michael.mccormick@opr.ca.gov | 510-672-5487

"CivicSpark leverages the unique power of national service to build local government climate capacity statewide, and will help local governments develop the programs, relationships and skills needed to mobilize California's climate-change response."

Karen Baker, Chief Services Officer, California Volunteers



Local
Government
Commission

