

For local governments completing [PE7 Action: Climate Adaptation Planning](#) and other actions from the [NYS Climate Smart Communities Program](#).

Guidance on creating an inclusive planning process

An inclusive planning process values, includes, and works with a fair representation of citizens from the community and is essential to completing this action. Local governments should develop or update a climate adaptation plan using an inclusive planning process that includes all stakeholders from the very beginning: residents, local leaders, businesses, employers, schools, landowners and tenant organizations, local farmers, local government entities representing all sectors, transportation entities, utilities, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, churches, and all others affected. Representation ideally will reflect the demographic makeup of the community's residents.

It is essential to include underrepresented and marginalized communities who may be at greater risk from climate change impacts. Groups to specifically target include black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, low-income residents, people with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, people who speak English as a second language, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (or questioning) and other (LGBTQ+) residents, individuals experiencing homelessness, youth, seniors, rural and urban residents, and residents of dwellings with greater exposure to the impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding, heat).

Remember that these groups are not a monolith, and outreach will look different from group to group and from community to community. Working with a diversity of stakeholders across sectors and scales will likely increase the quality of potential adaptation strategies, provide opportunities for new partnerships, and help build local support for implementing your plan.

Best practices for inclusive stakeholder engagement

- Clearly identify roles and expectations at the beginning of the planning process while being adaptable throughout the process, including changing course if necessary.
- Commit to listening and learning; focus on asking open-ended questions.
- Be patient and process-oriented (as opposed to goal-oriented).
- Build long-term relationships to pursue projects that have tangible benefits for the community.
- Expand and diversify partnerships with community-based organizations whose scopes go beyond environmental work.
- Engage residents of most heavily impacted neighborhoods as leaders in the process.
- Increase the internal capacity of the working group to incorporate equity considerations by completing antiracism and/or equity and the environment trainings; see resources below in Section G.
- For project communications, use multiple platforms to reach as much of your community as possible, including social media, emails, websites, and other virtual means as well as printed materials posted in public spaces/events and mailed to residents (e.g., on the back of their water bill).

Practical tips for planning events

- Advertise events through outreach venues used by target audience.
- Offer events at a time of day/day of week that is most convenient for working people, or in conjunction with existing community meeting and events.

- Offer events in target neighborhoods at trusted locations (e.g., churches/community centers).
- Offer childcare, food and stipends to event attendees.
- Be willing to alter meeting plans and processes if they are not working well for participants.
- Address historical injustices and current inequities that impact residents.
- Employ a peer-to-peer, rather than “expert lecturer” approach.
- Compensate an organizer from within the community.
- Simplify and translate outreach messages to be more easily accessible.

Find more resources on the [Inclusive Planning for Community Resilience](#) webpage from the NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University.