

ELEVATE CLIMATE ACTION

The Power of a Strong Relationship with Your Utility

Whether your community is serviced by an investor-owned or a municipal utility, electric utilities are critical players in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and achieve climate goals. While driving more building and transportation systems to electrify may seem like an obvious win-win for you and your utility, it is rarely that simple.

Opportunities for collaborating with your utility to implement climate and sustainability projects include data analysis, program development and deployment, and targeted outreach. Consider these best practices:

	IMPACT AREA	ACTION	BEST PRACTICE
INNOVATIVE ↓ BASIC	Utility Engagement	Invite utility reps to join a climate action planning advisory group or implementation team.	Clark County, NV: As part of the process to develop the All-In Community Sustainability & Climate Action Plan, hosted two Energy Roundtables to specifically address the concerns of and find areas of collaboration with all energy related utilities in Southern Nevada.
		Request utility reps to lead a group focused on driving climate friendly energy solutions.	Wellesley, MA: Representatives from Wellesley's Climate Action Committee and Municipal Light Plant co-led the Energy Working Group for Wellesley's Climate Action Plan.
		Partner with utility to provide energy coaching programs to residents and businesses.	Traverse City, MI: Traverse City Light & Power is piloting an energy coaching program to help residents identify opportunities to save money on utility bills.
INNOVATIVE ↓ BASIC	Incentive & Outreach Programs	Promote existing utility incentives for energy efficiency, renewable energy, battery storage, and electric vehicles.	New Bedford, MA: Through the NB Resilient dashboard, the City is promoting the IOU incentives to its community members. (www.nbresilient.com/actions-you-can-take)
		Assess effectiveness of existing utility incentives and share justification for adjustments.	Danvers, MA: As part of the development of their climate action plan, the Danvers Municipal Light Plant assessed existing rebates for heat pumps by interviewing community members and contractors. The result was a request to their board to increase incentives. Since the change and the launch of a targeted campaign to homes ready for upgrades, the program has seen a 300% increase in participation.
		Launch an electrification outreach campaign.	
		Apply for funding to drive community electrification. (Or just help secure funding for something of value to them like a grid capacity study).	Shrewsbury, MA: The Town applied for and was awarded a grant through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to launch a neighborhood activation campaign to promote home decarbonization efforts through a behavior change program.
		Launch a home energy labelling program.	Columbia, MO: Has a robust energy labeling program for residential properties that provides homeowners with a free Home Efficiency Score after completing energy efficiency upgrades.
		Accelerate the electrification transition.	Bellevue and Redmond, WA: Through the Energy Smart Eastside program, six cities are driving the installation of heat pumps in homes. (www.energysmarteastside.org)
INNOVATIVE ↓ BASIC	Clean Energy Transition	Purchase renewable energy credits.	Concord, MA: In 2023, CMLP achieved its goal of a 100% carbon-free power supply by purchasing renewable power from local, New England developers. This was seven years ahead of the schedule called for in Concord's Climate Action and Resilience Plan.
		Generate more electricity through renewable energy sources.	CPS Energy - San Antonio, TX: Provides 500 megawatts (MW) of solar and 1,066 MW of wind from local and regional sources.
		Launch a Community Choice Electricity Aggregation program.	Encinitas (www.sdcommunitypower.org) Sunnyvale, CA (www.sunnyvaleclimateaction.org/category/promoting-clean-electricity#community-choice-aggregation)
		Create a Sustainable Energy Utility.	Washington D.C. (www.dcseu.com) Ann Arbor, MI (www.a2gov.org/sustainability-innovations-home/sustainability-me/ann-arbors-sustainable-energy-utility-seu)

Sustainable Energy Utilities

A Sustainable Energy Utility is a community-led utility that is supplemental to existing utilities and offers an optional path towards achieving sustainability and climate goals through energy efficiency, renewable energy, battery storage and other local priorities. Different models exist in the US. The **DC Sustainable Energy Utility (DCSEU)** and **Ann Arbor's Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)** are both designed to advance clean energy goals, but they differ in structure, scope, and strategy:

GOVERNANCE & OWNERSHIP		
	DCSEU	Ann Arbor SEU
Ownership	Operated by a private entity under contract with the city	Municipally owned and community-controlled
Governance	Overseen by the DC Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) and an advisory board	Directed by city staff and a steering committee, with public engagement
Participation	Mandatory for eligible programs	Voluntary opt-in model for residents and businesses
ENERGY SOURCE & INFRASTRUCTURE		
Energy Type	Supports energy efficiency and renewable energy (solar, HVAC upgrades, etc.)	Provides 100% renewable energy from local solar, battery storage, and geothermal
Infrastructure Focus	Incentives for upgrades to existing systems	Builds new infrastructure (rooftop solar, microgrids, geothermal) owned by the SEU
Grid Relationship	Works within existing utility grid	Supplements the existing grid (DTE Energy), with potential for microgrid independence
PROGRAM OFFERINGS		
Services	Rebates, technical assistance, job training, energy audits	Full installation of solar + battery systems, energy sharing via microgrids, weatherization, electrification
Target Audience	Broad: residential, commercial, institutional	Focused: residents and businesses in the city opting in to SEU programs
Affordability	Offers financial incentives and rebates including coverage for income-eligible	Covers upfront costs, recoups via energy billing; aims to be cheaper than traditional energy sources (e.g. energy storage through SEU less than average cost of whole-house generator)
STRATEGIC GOALS		
Climate Goals	Reduce energy use and carbon emissions citywide	Achieve local energy resilience and decarbonization; support Ann Arbor's A2Zero climate plan
Scale	Citywide programs with broad reach	Current waitlist to meet demand prior to expansion; aims to scale up to meet 75% of city's energy needs over time



We partner with cities, towns, and counties to build their capacity to elevate action to match the urgency of the climate crisis.

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