



# San Luis Obispo Climate Action Support

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Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
Best Practice Pilot Program

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Sponsors: SLO County Air Pollution Control District and SLO County  
Energy Watch



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The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research developed the Best Practice Pilot Program (BP3) to formalize the process of providing technical assistance to local and regional partners while capturing the design and implementation of best practices. The BP3 acts as a mechanism to institutionalize the production of case examples of piloted policies or programs recently recommended or required by the State. To learn more about the Best Practice Pilot Program, please visit the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research website. This report is one of a series of case studies supported by CivicSpark, a Governor’s Initiative AmeriCorps Program, administered by the Local Government Commission in partnership with the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.



## Executive Summary

For over ten years the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) has provided assistance to local city and county agencies in addressing the requirements of Assembly Bill 32, California's Global Warming Solutions Act, through local programs. With the completion of Climate Action Plans (CAPs) for all local jurisdictions, the APCD and their partners in the City/County Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Stakeholder Group have shifted their focus to implementing the plans. Although significant local government effort has been expended to meet the goals of AB 32, ongoing resource constraints require funding and resource collaborations to assist local jurisdictions in CAP implementation. The *CivicSpark* program was a natural fit for this collaborative effort in our region.

To help governments overcome limited capacity to address climate action planning at the local level, the Local Government Commission (LGC) has partnered with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to create *CivicSpark* – a Governor's Initiative of AmeriCorps. The LGC, a nonprofit with over 30 years of broad expertise in supporting local government policies and projects, serves as the overall *CivicSpark* program manager. A core component of *CivicSpark* is its collaboration with "Regional Partners" who are already invested locally and regionally in their communities. *CivicSpark* depends on Regional Partners to identify regional needs, aggregate local project work and identify supporting resources so the program can meet local and regional climate protection goals.

Through its leadership of the local City/County GHG Stakeholder Group over the past several years, the APCD has developed a network of government agencies countywide who are actively engaged in climate planning efforts. In recognition of those efforts, the APCD was selected as one of nine Regional Partners in California to implement the *CivicSpark* program, with a primary goal of providing assistance to local jurisdictions in implementing their CAPs to facilitate the reduction of GHGs throughout our region. The GHG Stakeholder Group identified nine GHG reduction measures common to each locally-adopted CAP and agreed development and implementation of those measures was the highest priority for our region.

Implementation of the common CAP measures is a multi-year project for the *CivicSpark* team. The first year (2014 – 2015), team members prepared a scope of work and performance goals to develop the top three measures and worked through the year to customize them to meet individual implementation goals and needs for each of our seven incorporated cities and the County. The measures they successfully advanced included: 1) ***Promotion of On-Site Solar Photovoltaic Installations*** by streamlining the permit process for small scale solar installations in the various jurisdictions; 2) ***Energy Efficiency Outreach and Incentives*** through the development of educational and outreach materials on residential and commercial energy efficiency improvements and incentive programs; and 3) ***Promotion of Energy Audit and Retrofit Programs*** by educating the community on the benefits of performing energy audits and retrofits before upgrading appliances and installing solar.

For 2015 – 2016, the *CivicSpark* team has continued the overarching goal of implementing the common GHG reduction measures, this year with a focus on energy efficiency by continuing work on measures 2 and 3, above (***Energy Efficiency Outreach and Incentives*** and ***Promoting Energy Audit and Retrofit Programs***).

## Background

San Luis Obispo County APCD's commitment to public health protection and preserving clean air is expressed in their mission statement:

*As stewards of healthful air supporting a healthy environment, our mission is to realize and preserve clean air for all, to promote community and individual responsibility for air quality, and to provide quality and cost effective service.*

The APCD embodies its mission statement in all it does and is recognized statewide as a leader in developing and implementing innovative emission reduction strategies and programs to protect air quality and public health in our region. The APCD was one of the first air districts to incorporate transportation control measures and sustainable community strategies into its first Clean Air Plan in 1991, which helped support a shift toward more compact and mixed use development to reduce dependence on vehicles and facilitate multi-modal transportation alternatives.

San Luis Obispo County is a very diverse region in its geography, environment, demographics and economy. Encompassing about 3300 square miles with nearly 100 miles of coastline, the county has three general geographic regions that differ significantly in their topography and climate: The Coastal Plateau, the Upper Salinas Valley and the East County Plains. Agriculture and tourism are the top two industries in our region, both of which are at significant risk from the impacts of drought, sea level rise and other potential effects of climate change. SLO County is also home to the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant on the coast and two large solar plants in the east county region, providing a significant portion of the carbon-free energy produced in California.

The APCD was one of the first air districts statewide to address climate change with the adoption by its Board in November 2005 of the APCD Climate Protection Program, a multi-point plan with the following goals:

- Develop a county-wide inventory of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Target grant funds for GHG reduction projects for use in Climate Action Plans;
- Develop public education & outreach programs;
- Develop a strategic partnership with Cal Poly to assess GHG impacts and aid with outreach efforts; and
- Work with the seven local cities to adopt CAPs.

This was followed in 2007 with Board approval of an update to the APCD Strategic Action Plan that included a goal to "Minimize Local and Regional Contributions to Climate Change". That same year, the APCD Board approved spending \$443,000 in grant funds for GHG reduction projects, and APCD staff initiated the formation of the City/County GHG Stakeholder Committee, a network of local government agencies from San Luis Obispo County focused on information sharing and the development and implementation of GHG initiatives at the local level. Since its formation, the Stakeholder group has worked together in sharing knowledge and resources, seeking grant funds and developing community partnerships to coordinate the development of GHG emission inventories and climate action plans for all local jurisdictions in the county. The County of San Luis Obispo and the City of San Luis Obispo completed and adopted their CAPs in 2011 and 2012, with the other six cities adopting their CAPs in 2013 and 2014.

Despite the successful development and adoption of CAPs by all local jurisdictions, a real risk exists of them not being fully implemented due to a lack of resources and capacity within the jurisdictions. The *CivicSpark* program presented the opportunity to overcome this hurdle by adding the capacity to assist in the implementation of the CAPs with a minimal investment of local resources. Because of APCD's successful history of supporting climate action and GHG reduction planning in the region, they were a natural choice to become the hub for the program in this region.

To overcome the lack of local resources and provide the match funding for the *CivicSpark* program, APCD collaborated with the County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department, San Luis Obispo County's Energy Watch Partnership, and the Central Coast Clean Cities Coalition (C5), a group of local stakeholders whose mission is to expand the use of alternative fuel vehicles and fueling infrastructure throughout the Central Coast. SLO County Energy Watch is a partnership between the County of San Luis Obispo, PG&E, SoCalGas and participating cities and community service districts that provides information and energy management services to targeted customers on energy use and cost, associated with facilities and infrastructure. This information is used to identify, finance, and implement energy- and cost-saving energy efficiency measures, as well as to track building performance.

## Initial Goals

The fundamental objective for continuing the *CivicSpark* program in SLO County for year two was to build on the success of the year one program in supporting the development and deployment of CAP implementation measures for all jurisdictions countywide.

Based on input from the GHG Stakeholder Committee and SLO County Energy Watch, two of the CAP measures from year one pertaining to energy efficiency were chosen for additional implementation in year two: ***Promoting Energy Audit and Retrofit Programs*** and ***Energy Efficiency Outreach and Incentives***. Two main goals were identified and agreed upon to support implementation of these measures: 1) To assist SLO County Energy Watch with the implementation of the Municipal Energy Management Plan (MEMP); and 2) To assist SLO County Energy Watch with targeted small-to-medium business outreach and program promotion. The year two *CivicSpark* team began providing CAP implementation assistance to the seven cities and the County in November 2015.

In acknowledgement of the relatively minor funding provided by C5, a third, minor goal was identified: 3) To assist C5 with alternative fuels and fueling infrastructure outreach and promotion.

The program goals did not change substantially over the course of the 11-month service year; however, the second goal of assisting SLO County Energy Watch with targeted small-to-medium business outreach changed in scope and ultimately was not completed. The difficulties that led to this goal not being completed are detailed below in the Project Difficulties section of this report.

## Process

### Goal #1: Municipal Energy Management Program (MEMP)

In an effort to help municipalities in San Luis Obispo County meet the targets set by AB 32, the SLO County Energy Watch team developed the MEMP program; its overall objective is to increase the energy

efficiency of municipal facilities to reduce GHG emissions. The *CivicSpark* team's involvement with MEMP was to complete an energy use inventory of municipal facilities and create an energy baseline report for each of the seven cities in San Luis Obispo County.

Completion of the energy use inventories and reports required ongoing coordination and collaboration with city and utility stakeholders. Fellows worked closely with city staff to coordinate meetings, acquire data access authorization and organize meter and facility information, and promote city participation in the MEMP. The fellows used the EPA Energy Star Portfolio Manager as their main platform to organize each city's facilities and collect energy use data from the utilities. After analyzing electric and natural gas use and cost trends over a three-year period, the fellows generated a baseline energy report for each city, presented their findings to each jurisdiction, and discussed next steps with the MEMP program.

## Goal #2: Targeted business outreach and program promotion

Fellows assisted Energy Watch with targeted small-to-medium business outreach through the development of a catalog of "hard-to-reach" businesses and a list of best practices for identifying businesses that meet the hard-to-reach criteria defined by PG&E.

## Goal #3: C5 outreach and promotion

Fellows assisted C5 with alternative fuels outreach and education by organizing an outreach event at the downtown San Luis Obispo farmers' market and coordinating a Green Car Show and Ride & Drive at the 2016 San Luis Obispo Earth Day Celebration. Fellows contacted car dealers and local alternative fuel enthusiasts to participate in the Green Car Show and Ride & Drive. During the farmers' market and Earth Day event, fellows set up and ran the information booth to educate and engage the public about alternatives fuels and C5's efforts in the region.

## Outcomes

### Goal #1

*Municipal Energy Management Program (MEMP)* – Fellows worked with SLO County Energy Watch to implement MEMP as a means to fulfill the Energy Audit and Retrofit Program CAP measure. Fellows worked with city personnel to gather building specifications and with the utility companies (PG&E and SoCalGas) to gather usage data. The Portfolio Manager tool was used to organize building information and energy use data as well as conduct trend analyses. Fellows successfully created Energy Baseline Reports for each of the seven incorporated cities in the county, and presented their findings to the cities. During these meetings, the Energy Watch team and Central Coast fellows actively engaged the cities in conversation about the benefits of energy efficiency for their jurisdiction, and city staff clearly were engaged and interested in the process, results and next steps of MEMP. Energy Watch looks forward to continuing the working relationships created with the cities, as many of the cities are ready to take advantage of the MEMP's offerings. The Energy Baseline Reports highlight facilities in each city that would benefit from retrofits and incentives; therefore, the reports serve as an excellent reference guide for Energy Watch and the cities. Additionally, handoff materials and information on how to use the Portfolio Manager tool have been shared with the cities to ensure that staff is equipped with the tools and knowledge to continue forward with MEMP.

## Goal #2

*Targeted small-to-medium business outreach and program promotion* – Fellows generated two lists of “Hard-to-Reach” businesses for Staples Energy, Energy Watch’s third party energy efficiency contractor. Staples used the lists to identify potential targeted customers. Ultimately, this goal was not completed as a result of insufficient time and lack of direction in the goal’s work plan.

## Goal #3

*C5 outreach and promotion* – The fellows assisted C5 with implementation of community outreach events to educate the public about alternative fuels and alternative fueling infrastructure. The fellows helped to coordinate the Green Car Show and Ride & Drive held at the 2016 San Luis Obispo Earth Day Celebration. In addition, they organized an outreach event at the downtown San Luis Obispo farmers’ market to inform the public about alternative fuels and the Earth Day event. The fellows were able to engage 102 citizens at the Farmer’s Market event, while the Green Car Show attracted over 100 people and 10 people participated in the Ride & Drive.

## Project Difficulties

### Goal #1

*Municipal Energy Management Program (MEMP)* – For the most part, this objective was very successful, and the fellows completed all assigned tasks. The main difficulties of this project were caused by delays. The fellows eventually received all of the necessary resources and data that they needed to complete the project, but several delays arose during their collaboration with the cities and utility companies. With the cities, a lack of staff capacity made it more difficult to acquire/verify information and schedule meetings. With the utilities, the main project difficulty was being able to successfully upload energy cost and usage data onto the online Portfolio Manager tool. This difficulty was partly caused by the lengthy process of acquiring authorization needed to obtain data. Additionally, there were difficulties navigating Portfolio Manager and completing the steps of data upload.

### Goal #2

*Targeted small-to-medium business outreach and program promotion* – This objective had many difficulties from the onset, leading to its non-completion during the service year. The first difficulty had to do with timing and prioritization. Throughout the service year, Goal #1 deliverables were consistently prioritized over Goal #2, and due to delays (see above), Goal #1 took longer to complete than initially planned. Additional Goal #2 difficulties included a lack of clarity of the scope of the project on the part of Staples Energy, which led to mid-stream changes in the project plan and ultimately to an unfinished project.

### Goal #3

*C5 outreach and promotion* – There were two main challenges with this objective; first, a lack of background knowledge and training on alternative fuels made public education difficult for the fellows. Second, since this was a public outreach project, it lacked measurable performance indicators, making it difficult to determine how successful the fellows were in completing tasks.

## Replicable Elements

The success of this project was due in large part to the collaboration between the various jurisdictions involved and the willingness of the jurisdictions to work together toward a common goal. Achieving that collaboration takes time spent working with stakeholders to define program goals, identify implementation needs and invest in outreach to policy and decision makers to demonstrate how the program will meet their needs and benefit the community at large. The State could greatly assist in the outreach effort by providing overarching guidance to local jurisdictions on the mandates driving proposed programs and the importance of local government involvement and investment in securing a positive outcome.

The level of collaboration achieved in this program is replicable wherever common goals can be identified that will mutually benefit all partners combined with a willingness of one or more local agencies to take the lead in providing program guidance and direction. In this case, the lead was shared by APCD and County Planning, with APCD coordinating program funding, initiating meetings with stakeholders and hosting the Fellows at their office, and SLO County Planning guiding the incorporation of Energy Watch requirements to create a program other jurisdictions can implement.