RASCL Coffee Hour:

Developing a Community Sustainability Plan

A little about me…

- Climate Policy Planner with DNREC's Climate & Sustainability Section
  - 2 years with DNREC!
- UD Master's in Geography (Climatology Program)
- Focus on communication, climate resilience, and equity

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Let's start with a little bit of context...

DNREC held its first round of Sustainability Planning Grants in 2017

- Five communities:
  - Newark
  - Wilmington
  - Fenwick Island
  - Frederica
  - Milton
- Five very different plans, with different approaches and priorities

But what IS sustainability planning?

Sustainability can mean different things to different people

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Waste Reduction

Wetland Conservation

Walkable/Bikeable Communities

Environmental Equity

Trees and Yardscapes

…and many more!

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It may look different depending on where you are!

- Urban sustainability
  - Integrate green space to reduce urban heat islands
  - Green building construction
  - Mixed-use and transport-oriented development planning
  - Wastewater and stormwater management

- Rural sustainability
  - Public transportation poses different challenges in rural communities
  - Nutrient management in ag-heavy communities
  - Support existing community's ties to working lands
  - Protect wild spaces

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The core of sustainability...

From the Institute for Sustainable Communities:

"Throughout the world, people want the same things: access to clean air and water; economic opportunities; a safe and healthy place to raise their kids; shelter; lifelong learning; a sense of community; and the ability to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives."

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Resilience vs. Sustainability

"Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Having a sustainability plan in place can be key in identifying long- and short-term goals for responding to future climate change from a sustainability standpoint."

"Resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to change. It prioritizes responding to the pressures and threats we are faced with now and into the future and preparing to lessen the frequency and duration of disruptions from those threats. A good sustainability plan includes elements of resilience."

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Why do communities need a sustainability plan?

- Helps clarify a vision, set measurable goals, and focus efforts
- Great opportunity to get input directly from the community on their needs and concerns
- Reduce waste and pollution
- Improve community health and well-being
- Protect valuable natural resources for future generations
- Economic development and access to green jobs
- Access to implementation grant funding

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How to build your plan?

Start with a vision

Reach out to the community

Consider your context

- What are the biggest sustainability challenges facing your community?
    - Engagement process can help with this!
- What work has already been done? (e.g. other planning documents, sustainability initiatives, committees)
- Unique/notable physical or demographic features?

https://dnrec.delaware.gov/climate-coastal-energy/climate-change/
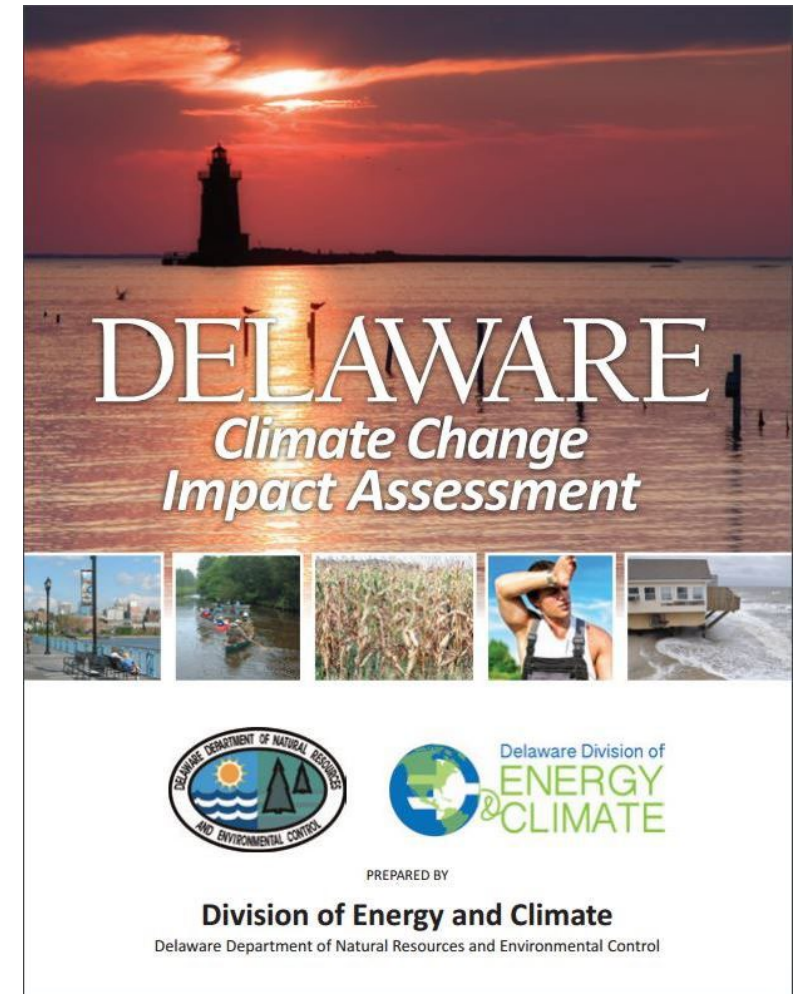
Consider your SCOPE

- What categories of sustainability will you focus on?
  - How do these best support your vision?
- Who has authority to implement actions?
- What <u>time frame</u> are you looking at?
- What is <u>feasible</u> for your team?
  - Staff capacity
  - Funding

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Set clear goals and targets

Remember to keep goals S.M.A.R.T.!

Setting SMART goals

Specific
The goal is concrete and tangible - everyone knows what it looks like.

Measurable
The goal has an objective measure of success that everyone can understand.

Attainable
The goal is challenging, but should be achievable with the resources available.

Relevant
The goal meaningfully contributes to larger objectives like the overall mission.

Timely
This goal has a deadline or, better yet, a timeline of progress milestones.

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Some helpful resources…

Inspiration: UN Sustainable Development Goals

https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Setting Measurable Goals and Best Practices

Minnesota GreenStep Cities
https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/best-practices

Lists example goals and actions in 29 sustainability categories

Sustainability Best Practices Framework
https://www.ca-ilg.org/sustainability-best-practices-framework

Includes both agency and community actions

Georgetown Adaptation Clearinghouse
https://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/

Focused on climate change and resilience (but useful!)

Community Engagement and Public Participation

The Sustainable Communities Initiative
The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities

EPA Public Participation Toolkit
https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide

EPA Smart Growth Guide
https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/creating-equitable-healthy-and-sustainable-communities

Advancing Community-Driven Climate Resilience Planning
https://www.nacrp.org/resource-library

Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities
https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/community-engagement-guide-for-sustainable-communities

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BONUS SLIDE: Finding and Getting Funding!

Nature-based Solutions Funding Database
https://fundingnaturebasedsolutio
ns.nwf.org/

University of Delaware Grant Assistance Program (GAP)
https://www.bidenschool.udel.edu
/ipa/serving-delaware/grant-
assistance

Delaware Database for Funding Resilient Communities
https://www.bidenschool.udel.edu
/ipa/resources/ddfrc

Federal Funding Sources for Municipal Sustainability
https://www.nlc.org/article/2023/
04/13/federal-funding-sources-for-
municipal-sustainability-and-
climate/

https://www.nlc.org/resource/fact
-sheet-getting-started-with-key-
federal-opportunities/

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