Beacon Program

Guidelines for Participation and Recognition

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Beacon Program Overview

The Beacon Program recognizes and celebrates California local governments that take actions to voluntarily reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save energy, and adopt policies and programs that promote sustainability and resilience. Participation and award eligibility is open to California cities, counties, and special districts. Beacon Champions are also invited to apply for award recognition.

Participating in the Beacon Program

It's simple to become a Beacon Program participant. Any city, county, or special district in California is eligible to participate. We welcome agencies at every step of the climate action journey to consider applying. There is no deadline to apply; applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. To join, follow the steps below. Sample resolutions, staff reports, and letter of supports are available on the ILG's website for use.

Cities & counties:
- Fill out an online application: ca-ilg.org/how-join
- Adopt a resolution by the governing body

Special districts:
- Fill out an online application: ca-ilg.org/how-join
- Submit a letter of support from CEO, General Manager, or similar.

Participant Support & Promotion

Agencies participating in the program will have access to monthly newsletters with training and funding updates, social media promotion, and the opportunity to have ILG produce case stories highlighting your projects. ILG provides ongoing technical assistance to help you understand your energy and GHG emissions data and to identify sustainability best practices. Participants will also have access to peer learning activities and calls to share innovative programs and lessons learned.

Additionally, ILG provides the following promotional opportunities to Beacon Program participants:
- Recognition at the annual Beacon Awards Ceremony in front of a statewide audience of your peers.
- Recognition associated with League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, California Special Districts Association, and other events and publications.
- Conference sessions or webinars to bring together participants for networking, information sharing and recognition.
- Press releases about participation and awards including distribution assistance to you or your agency Public Information Officer upon request.
- Cross-promotion using ILG's social media platforms highlighting your agency's sustainability leadership and accomplishments.
- Presence on ILG website including an individual participant profile highlighting your agency's efforts: ca-ilg.org/participants
- Use of program logos.

Award Categories

The Beacon Program offers three types of award categories.

Awards open to cities and counties:

- **Beacon Vanguard Award:** Recognizing a city or county's holistic approach to addressing climate change. Participating agencies are required to complete each of the requirements for the five Spotlight Awards and adopt a Climate Action Plan to receive a Beacon Vanguard Award.

- **Spotlight Award:** Recognizing individual accomplishments of cities and counties participating in the Beacon Program that are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saving energy, and implementing sustainability best practices.

Awards open to cities, counties, special districts, and Beacon Champions:

- **Leadership, Resilience, and Innovation Awards:** Recognizing exceptional work by cities, counties, special districts, and Beacon Champions that are implementing cutting-edge projects, programs or polices that advance sustainability and resilience in their communities.

Beacon Vanguard and Spotlight Awards

For the Beacon Vanguard and Spotlight Awards, cities and counties will be honored at the Silver, Gold, and Platinum levels for undertaking sustainability activities in ten areas and for achieving measurable energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. Participating cities and counties are recognized with Spotlight Awards as they work to meet all of criteria necessary to win a Beacon Vanguard.

New in 2021, cities and counties are able to apply for the Lithium level in either the Agency or Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions Spotlight Award category. The Lithium level recognizes agencies going above and beyond the state targets of reducing GHG emissions 40 percent from 1990 levels, and eventually achieving the 2050 climate goal to reduce GHG emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels.

Award Criteria Guidance & Reporting

Beacon Vanguard Award

The Beacon Vanguard Award recognizes an agency's holistic approach to addressing climate change. Participating agencies are required to complete each of following six elements to win a Beacon Vanguard Award:

1. Agency Greenhouse Gas Reductions
2. Agency Electricity Savings
3. Agency Natural Gas Savings
4. Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction
5. Activities in each of the Institute's ten Sustainability Best Practice Areas
6. Adopt a climate action plan

Participating agencies are honored with Silver, Gold and Platinum Beacon Vanguard Awards for accomplishing all of the criteria specified. Reduction criteria increases with each award level. Silver, gold and platinum award levels require 5, 10 and 20% energy savings and greenhouse gas reductions respectively. Sustainability Best Practice Activity information is gathered via surveys and does not require quantifiable measurements.

Spotlight Award *Areas of Achievement*	**Silver Level**	**Gold Level**	**Platinum Level**	**Lithium Level**
Agency GHG Reductions				Surpass state goals in GHG emission reductions
Community GHG Reductions	5% reduction	10% reduction	20% reduction	
Agency Electricity Savings				
Agency Natural Gas Savings				
Sustainability Best Practice Activities	1 in each of 10 categories	3 in each of 10 categories	6 in each of 10 categories	
BEACON VANGUARD AWARD	Silver Level Beacon Vanguard	Gold Level Beacon Vanguard	Platinum Level Beacon Vanguard	

Agency and Community GHG Reductions

Baseline

Agencies may select their own baseline for measuring initial greenhouse gas emissions so long as the agency has a commonly accepted methodology to conduct the inventory. The selected baseline will be used to measure reductions in both the agency and the community.

For Silver, Gold, and Platinum Spotlight Award levels, ILG will accept baselines from 2009 onward, with others on a case-by-case basis.

Methodology

Several commonly accepted methodologies are available to prepare a greenhouse gas inventory. Previously completed inventories that used an earlier ICLEI, Climate Registry or other commonly accepted methodology will be accepted as well.

"Commonly accepted methodology" includes the following:
- ICLEI's methodology (www.icleiusa.org).
- The Local Government Operations Protocol for Greenhouse Gas Assessments and the U.S. Community Protocol for Accounting and Reporting of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

- Other greenhouse gas inventory accounting methodologies, such as those done by consultants, will be accepted on a case-by-case basis.

Reporting Progress

Greenhouse gas reductions are demonstrated through the completion of an updated GHG inventory (also known as a re-inventory). If your agency has completed a GHG re-inventory, please send results to ILG staff for review in order to receive recognition for your agency's efforts.

Both the baseline and comparative inventories must include the following categories to be eligible for award consideration:
- On-road transportation
- Waste
- Energy

Agency Electricity and Natural Gas Savings

Energy savings are the result of energy efficiency retrofits undertaken as a part of the following:
- Investor-owned or municipal utility energy efficiency programs;
- Programs funded by the California Energy Commission (CEC); or
- Efforts funded by the local agency or other sources.

Baseline

Agencies may select a baseline no earlier than 2009 from which to measure energy savings.

Accessing Energy Savings Data

For the electricity and natural gas savings categories, ILG accepts projected energy savings data from utilities or actual savings from an energy efficiency or energy savings project demonstrated over a 12-month period through utility bill statements.

Contact your Community Energy Manager, Account Representative, or similar associate at your utility to access energy savings data from energy efficiency retrofit projects and send reports to ILG staff.

For non-IOU related energy savings projects, only actual savings realized over a 12-month period, not cumulative savings, will be accepted. ILG will assist the Beacon participant in reviewing the data.

Options for Demonstrating Natural Gas Savings

The Beacon Program offers two options to participants for demonstrating natural gas savings as described below. Contact ILG staff to make a determination on your agency's option for demonstrating natural gas savings.

Option 1: Quantitative

The participating agency calculates projected natural gas savings achieved through energy efficiency retrofits or through actual savings utility bill statements over a 12-month period; or

Option 2: Qualitative

Agencies that use very little natural gas (less than 100,000 Btu annually), such as those with few facilities and minimal natural gas powered equipment, can decide not to include natural gas usage and instead limit its energy savings information to electricity only.

- If the agency selects this option, it will be asked to demonstrate an increasing level of commitment to reduce natural gas use, commensurate with the three Beacon Vanguard Award levels.
- This may include, for example, increasing efforts to retrofit or replace natural gas appliances or equipment with more energy efficient ones or adopt policies and procedures to operate the appliances or equipment more efficiently.

Sustainability Best Practices

Actions submitted for the Sustainability Best Practices Activities category must go above and beyond state mandates, highlighting your agency's creative and local solutions to addressing climate and sustainability.

Based upon the Institute's Sustainability Best Practices Framework, the ten Best Practice Areas are:

1. Energy Efficiency and Conservation
2. Water and Waste Water Systems
3. Green Building
4. Waste Reduction and Recycling
5. Climate-Friendly Purchasing
6. Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Fuels
7. Efficient Transportation
8. Land Use and Community Design
9. Open Space and Offsetting Carbon Emissions
10. Community and Individual Action

Visit www.ca-ilg.org/SustainabilityBestPractices to download the Best Practices Framework which offers options for local action ten best practice areas that vary in complexity and are adaptable to fit the unique needs and circumstances of individual communities. Agencies are not limited to activities listed in the Best Practices Framework. Local agencies are encouraged to be innovative and undertake other activities that meet local conditions.

Reporting Progress

Participants are asked to provide brief descriptions of **up to six** activities **that are ongoing or that your agency has completed** in each of the Best Practice Areas. These activities should be activities that you would like to highlight and apply towards the award achievement. Activity information will be shared on your agency participant profile.

Beacon Leadership, Resilience, and Innovation Awards

Starting in 2021, whether your agency is a Beacon participant or not, you will be able to submit an innovative project, program, plan, or policy your agency has implemented for award consideration. Eligible submissions will highlight actions your agency has undertaken that advance climate resilience and adaptation or inclusive clean energy and transportation solutions. Achievements in these categories is not required to receive the Beacon Vanguard Award.

The purpose of these project-based awards categories is to recognize and promote the outstanding efforts and innovations by local agencies across California. The following categories are available for award recognition:

- Leadership in Climate Resilience and Adaptation
- Equity and Engagement in Climate Resilience and Adaptation
- Cross-Agency Collaboration in Climate Resilience and Adaptation
- Innovation in Energy
- Innovation in Clean Transportation

Multiple winners in each category may be awarded, with special recognition for runners-up. Winners will receive recognition at the annual Beacon Awards Ceremony in front of a statewide audience of your peers, and recognition associated with League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, California Special Districts Association, and other events and publications as applicable. ILG will produce case studies for selected winners for distribution via ILG and affiliate channels and publications, submission to the ICARP Adaptation Clearinghouse, and others.

Eligibility & Instructions

Any California city, county, special district, Beacon Champion that provides a program or service that has proven tangible and measurable results with a minimum of one year of actual implementation are eligible to apply. Applicants do not need to be participants in the Beacon Program or active Beacon Champions to apply, but will be encouraged to join the program following award submission. Entities that are eligible to serve as Beacon Champions such as nonprofits, community choice aggregation programs, foundations, councils of governments, transportation agencies, and others may apply for award consideration.

Please complete all fields of the electronic application and upload up to 10 program photos and/or materials to the application being submitted

Please address the following in your narrative in 1500 words or less:
- Describe the need or concern that prompted the development of the program, policy, or project.
- Describe the steps taken by your agency to address the need or concern.
    - Explain the objectives and how they were met.
    - Demonstrate how your agency utilized **inclusive public engagement** practices to identify and implement the solution.
    - Explain how the program, policy, or project incorporates practices that **advance equity**.
- Describe the results of the program.
    - How did the program affect the community and **enhance resiliency and adaptation**?
    - What, if any, was the cost or resource savings?
    - What lessons are instructive to other agencies?

Only one application and narrative per category may be submitted by an agency. A program or activity may only be submitted for one category. Apply online ca-ilg.org/apply-awards