



Beacon Program Session 2013 League of California Cities Annual Conference

Summary of Small Group Knowledge Sharing

Question Explored During the Small Group Discussions

As a local leader, how do you work with colleagues, staff, neighboring agencies and residents to advance sustainability in your community? What opportunities do you see? What challenges have you/your agency encountered?

Group 1

Key points

Pittsburg has a comprehensive sustainability program that Laura spearheads. They are working with PG&E to convert lights to LED, have a 200 acre solar farm planned at a converted landfill, are working with their waste hauler to green their operations. They have a big challenge on GHG emissions because of an obsolete powerplant on the waterfront that has or will be closing. (Pittsburg)

Working as a council member on the policy side, supports Melanie and other key staff to implement policy. They find good people who can innovate sustainability practices and move them around within the city bureaucracy. Signing up for Beacon was very helpful in moving the policy debate at council forward. The city created an Environmental Quality committee of residents which helped build a public constituency to support sustainability initiatives. They have a LEED platinum recycling facility that is actually a community gathering place. They accept food waste in their curbside recycling and composting program – the four Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle and rot! (El Cerrito)

They have kept rates stable, in part from revenues from recovered resources and funding from sister agencies; for example, EBMUD helps cover the cost to collect medications to reduce the burden on wastewater treatment from flushing pills down the drain. (El Cerrito)

Lessons for embedding sustainability

Laura has built up a reservoir of trust, and is also excellent at getting grants and matching funds, which make her initiatives appealing to others in the city, including the council. (Pittsburg)

It takes years to create a culture but it is worth it. Once the culture of sustainability is established, it doesn't have to be policed and doesn't rely on preaching. Staff works in teams and thinks about their actions day-to-day. She reports directly to the city manager and is a hub for city services and functions. Grants help overcome the lack of internal policy agreement, begin to change practices and the culture. The biggest challenge they face is staff capacity that can allow them to capitalize on the community support that has been built. (Pittsburg)

The city has had to reorganize some to embed sustainability. Staff was moved into Community and Economic Development, public works, etc. Once a function is transformed, the new ways become best practices and are embedded. It happens more quickly when staff realize that the sustainability best practices also make good economic and fiscal sense, saving staff time and money. The city's Climate Action Plan provided a roadmap. (El Cerrito)

San Rafael hasn't reached out much to other communities, but is very interested in learning from the experiences of others. Hearing from others about new ways to do things is extremely helpful. Anything that Beacon can do to facilitate that would be welcome. San Rafael does not have a sustainability commission, which relieves staff from a big administrative burden. The city holds quarterly community update meetings focused on the Climate Action Plan, convened by two city council members to avoid Brown Act conflicts. The meetings are convened in partnership with Sustainable San Rafael, which provides a built-in audience of interested residents and lets the city share leadership with the community. Provides a great alternative to staff reports at formal council meetings. (San Rafael)

Getting the council on board is the absolutely essential first step. Then staff can be supported and prodded to bring a sustainability perspective throughout the range of city functions. "Getting the right people on the bus in the right seats." (El Cerrito)

Group 2

How do you advance sustainability in your community?

- By engaging active community members (Benicia & Palo Alto)
- Through the sustainable community and action plans (Benicia)
- Working with the business community (Benicia)
- Featuring community art project at community center made of recycled material (Benicia)
- Reusing old buildings and materials in new development (Benicia)
- CNG Fueling station (Lompoc)
- City owned green vehicles (Lompoc)
- Zero food waste in school system (Palo Alto)
- City owned utility (Palo Alto)

Opportunities

- Use money from good neighbor steering committee (Benicia)
- JPA to increase transit (Benicia)
- Excess recycled water with no place to distribute it (Lompoc)
- More efficient energy practices in school district (Palo Alto)
- Greater use of CNG (Lompoc)
- Water conservation is the best way to reduce use (Palo Alto)
- Greater local government collaboration regarding water supply (Palo Alto)
- Discourage use of water softeners (Lompoc)

Challenges

- Difficult to pull together information from different parts of the city in order to create a more informed general public (Benicia)
- Lack of resources (Benicia)
- Hard to share information with public and keep project momentum (Benicia)
- 82% of GHG come from a single source (Benicia)
- Losing professional staff (Palo Alto)
- Difficult to do good public engagement (Palo Alto)
- Lack of tools (Palo Alto)
- “Green infighting” on subjects such as CNG, anaerobic digesters etc. (Palo Alto)
- Not all cities within a county are willing to work with each other (Lompoc)
- Toxic groundwater coming from Stanford Resource Center (Palo Alto)
- Competing “water quality experts” (Palo Alto)
- Increasing cost of water (Palo Alto)

Group 3

Key points

Rancho Cucamonga is proud of the progress it has made in becoming a more solar-friendly city. The city has streamlined the processing for solar permitting and reduced associated fees. The city has also implemented a variety of best practices in community engagement and energy efficiency. The city still is having a challenge accounting for greenhouse gas reductions. Fabian will circle back with ICLEI and SANDAG to assist in this process.

South Gate: With a grant from SoCal Edison, the city has been able to create a Green Strategy which focuses on energy savings, community outreach and green building. The city has replaced its streetlights, replaced old motors and implemented energy efficient upgrades to agency buildings which has accounted for a great deal of energy reductions. They are now seeking to expand their partnerships to increase

reductions in the community and help surrounding cities. Education is key. The community has a diverse community and communicating with them about the value of energy efficiency has been a challenge. While the city has benefitted from many grants, there seems to be a lack of time and personnel to implement the desired changes in a timely manner. The city will also focus on commercial recycling and its new bike plan (made possible with a SRTS grant). The city truly believes that, "It takes money to make money", so it will continue to invest in sustainability.

Group 4

Santa Rosa

- Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) consults all cities in Sonoma County to help advance (muni and community) CAPS. They provide educational support.
 - RCPA is a subset of transit authority
- Dish drive-collect old dishware to use at events-no paper products-reduce waste-staff can contribute in a small way, easy

Modesto

- Waste water treatment plan
 - Potable water to sell to farmers
 - Near completion
- LED light replacement using ARRA funding.
- EV
- Conducted a Siemens energy audit
- They need help refining their efforts to become more effective
- Irrigation district provides power-will do commercial/industrial power renewables-looking at PACE programs now for financing

Mill Valley

- Their CAP never got approved, they are now incorporating into their general plan
- Planning group in Marin CO –
 - They need to focus more on implementation
 - They need additional members that are involved in implementation

Livermore: Photovoltaic facility in Livermore & LED street lighting

Bishop

- They focus on cutting costs in all their efforts
- They have gone paperless for council meetings
- Coordinating tree planting effort with SRTS efforts

Sonoma Clean Power

- Energy is a huge piece of GHG emissions so changing the source of power are critical to reducing GHG emissions.

- Transportation emissions is another big source of GHG emissions

Lincoln

- Fiscal sustainability- 115 recommendations, prioritize, will work through them
- Energy audit
 - Time of use change could save \$25,000
 - Other opportunities to save money

Challenges

- Recession- staff loss, internal staff support, managing ee projects etc.
- Challenges with ramp up/down when renewables aren't running
 - Want to look into solar

Ideas:

- Solar panels over irrigation panel-save space, reduce water evaporation
- Thorium -- nuclear energy - much safer than uranium

Group 5

How do you advance Sustainability in your community?

Arcata –

- Waste Treatment natural marsh from graded industrial area into marsh. Wetland treatment system circulates and returns back to Humboldt Bay.
- The City of Arcata bought forest land from timber companies to pursue a community-owned forest. Part of the forest can be logged safely under the rules of the forest stewardship council. The forest provides recreational space and additional park acreage for the community. Arcata is the only municipality that sells carbon credits through a community forest.
- Excessive energy use tax on homes that are consuming electricity went to the voters as an ordinance to be approved. Tiered levels of energy use, and charged 45%

Irvine-

- First city to do curbside recycling, green building ordinance,
- Irvine Range Water District - Marsh Water Treatment system has biodiversity and is beautiful.
- Toll roads in county have a mitigation bank.

Fort Bragg – What can local agencies do before the state mandates it?

Culver City –

- Solar requirement for buildings over a certain amount of square feet (10k?)

- Best municipal fleet in US - 3800 municipal fleets... natural gas, CNG buses (moving towards electronic)
- Just added in a light rail line
- Bicycle and pedestrian master plan added in 2008

What opportunities are there to advance sustainability?

Arcata - Work with your local developers for win-win situations for good quality housing; high levels of energy efficiency in green building standards - working with your partners in development you can achieve more.

Culver City - Interested in knowing if there are examples of the best ways to write a resolution related to embracing sustainability. City has language to share.

Community Choice Aggregation - Arcata is working with Marin.