

# Rapid Climate Change Strategy for Local Government

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**Rapid Climate Change Strategy Strategy** (RCCS) is the overall approach by a government or organization to adapt to the current rapid onset of climatic change locally and globally. Since the current climate change is scientifically linked to the use of fossil fuels, climate change strategy may include planning & implementing a strategy for reducing fossil energy use and costs and shifting to renewable energy sources.

**For a local government, a RCCS is comprised of three broad areas:**

## **1. Assessing Vulnerability**

What are the negative effects from rapid climate change in your territory for your residents, their communities and businesses?

## **2. Mitigation**

What actions can be taken to the minimize magnitude and severity of rapid climate change?

## **3. Adaptation**

How does implementation of actions proceed so that residents adjust to the changing conditions and the local government continues to provide quality services to citizens. These questions need to be approached with an eye fixed firmly on the cost over time to taxpayers. But "cost" is a broader concept than taxes. What is the true or whole cost to the tax payer? A local government may experience short term cost savings from implementing a strategy. But more importantly, the planning and implementation must help build the long term economic, social, and environmental progress of your residents. As the U.S. military says; climate change is a threat multiplier or threat enhancer. That may be a good way to look at climate change for any government.

***Planning for rapid climate change is simply part of risk management. It is part of the duty of local officials and staff to further the safety & prosperity of your residents.***

## **King County Led the Way**

To find out what other local governments are doing about this, simply search in Google with the words: (the name of the municipality) climate change plan. One of the first county governments to develop a comprehensive handbook on how to plan for rapid climate change at the local government level, was King County, Washington.

The King County process was driven by it's Executive Ron Sims. Mr. Sims was picked in 2008 by American City & County Magazine as County Leader of the Year. King County's seat of government is Seattle. Located on Puget Sound in Washington State, and covering 2,134 square miles, King County is nearly twice as large as the average county in the United States. With more than 1.8 million people, it also ranks as the 13th most populous county in the nation. The County's gateway site about climate change is <http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/globalwarming.aspx>

## The King County Process

The table sets out a summary of the steps used by King County in , “Preparing for Climate Change: A Guidebook for Local, Regional and State Governments, Prepared by the King County, Washington government.”

<b>1. Review of science about rapid climate change for your region.</b>	
<b>2. Scope the rapid climate change impacts to your territory, departments and major sectors.</b>	And, for your region and areas upstream water-wise for you.
<b>3. Obtain “buy-in” from the elected officials and employees.</b>	
<b>4. Develop a Preparedness Message for sector leaders and citizens.</b>	
<b>5. Build your climate rapid change preparedness Team</b>	This is the group that will develop your plan. Remember that in addition to government staff, include community and sector business members, and educators.
<b>6. Identify planning areas relevant to rapid climate change.</b>	Scope your departments and business sectors.
<b>7. Conduct a rapid climate change vulnerability assessment.</b>	Remember to include the supply lines/chains of your major employers.
<b>8. Conduct a rapid climate change risk assessment.</b>	Remember to include the supply lines/chains of your major employers.
<b>9. Set preparedness goals.</b>	
<b>10. Develop Preparedness Plan.</b>	
<b>11. Implementation.</b>	
<b>12. Management, evaluation, plan updating.</b>	

## Other Resources

Some local governments are starting to join business and report to the Carbon Disclosure Project <https://www.cdproject.net/en-US/Respond/Pages/CDP-Cities.aspx> . Most local government operations-wise, is similar to the service sector. For tools for that sector, office building, vehicle fleets, land use and other things, go to The Green House Gas Protocol <http://www.ghgprotocol.org/> . Also, research Full Cost Accounting.

This writing was developed from a variety of materials used in my teaching and from the UW School of Engineering January 2008 course “Developing A Climate Change Strategy for Businesses & Public Institutions. Jay Moynihan Community, Natural Resources, and Economic Development Shawano County 311 North Main St. Shawano, WI 54166 Jay.moynihan@ces.uwex.edu (715) 526 – 6136