Virginia Climate Center at George Mason University

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act will provide millions of dollars to state and local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate related impacts, such as flooding, sea level rise, and extreme heat events. However, municipalities must prepare climate action plans that include baseline emissions inventory and infrastructure vulnerabilities, as well as establish goals and specific actions to mitigate and adapt to climate related impacts.

Virginia has 133 municipalities, but only ten have completed a climate or resiliency action plan. Many municipalities lack the resources and expertise or lack the finances to hire a private consultancy to develop these plans. Therefore, many Virginia municipalities are at a disadvantage in partaking in the federal programs that could provide much needed funding for infrastructure improvement and energy savings.

George Mason University now offers a community extension service to help municipalities with developing and implementing climate and resiliency action plans.

Objectives

- Improve the potential likelihood for each municipality to receive and make effective use of federal funds based on demonstrated planning and strategy development plans.
- Improve the potential for each municipality to achieve real, measurable, and impactful projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the physical infrastructure and human health of its citizens.
- Improve the likelihood of informed local government decision making on resource allocation and grant solicitation.
- Empower individuals to become more involved in local government decisions.

Method

This initiative will work closely with each municipality in three phases.

Phase 1 → Conduct listening sessions whereby Mason students interview key stakeholders in the community and local government about their needs and values. These interviews use a structured approach and follow a successful model for obtaining critically important information.

Phase 2 → Create a task force that will employ federally approved models to assess greenhouse gas emissions and infrastructure vulnerabilities associated with climate change, which provides the jurisdiction a baseline to develop goals and strategies to adapt and mitigate damage from these impacts.

Phase 3 → Embed students in local governments to assist in implementing the plan, which also enriches the student's education.

If you are interested in working with George Mason University on a climate and resiliency action plan, please contact Paul Bubbosh (pbubbosh@gmu.edu) and Joel Hicks (jhicks19@gmu.edu).

For more information on the Virginia Climate Center, visit www.vaclimate.org.