



Effective Practices for Implementing Local Climate and Energy Programs:

Conducting and Evaluating Pilot Projects

Lessons Learned *by* Communities *for* Communities

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WHAT IS IT?

Pilot projects are an opportunity to “test the waters” for your project on a small scale, provide insight and data on what works, and adjust your strategy for full-scale implementation.

WHY DO IT?

- Pilots provide data and lessons for the expansion of sustainability initiatives.
- It is easier to widen a pilot than to jump into a project all at once.
- Starting with a small number of pilots allows you to target your services and focus your resources.
- Pilots provide examples for others to emulate and can demonstrate that your idea works. They also can be a source of testimonials for a wider roll-out.
- Data from a pilot establishes a baseline for future projects.

WHAT WORKS?

- Make sure that everyone involved—from program staff to participants—knows that it is an experiment and that it will be okay if things do not work out exactly as planned.
- Be open to trial and error, but make an effort to create an efficient and effective pilot from the get-go.
- Allow the design of the pilot to be flexible enough to adapt as uptake or information increases.
- Learn from similar projects in your region and use them as a source for what to try and what not to try.
- Be clear with the public that the pilot project is a valuable and necessary way to get questions about the project answered.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH OUT FOR?

- A pilot may not provide an example to emulate if it falls short of its goals.
- Making the pilot program relevant to other communities can be a challenge. It can be hard to get beyond perceived differences.
- Don't think too small. Doing a pilot gives you the opportunity to attempt full-scale implementation.
- It can be difficult to run pilots with grants that have short timeframes and need quick results.

WHAT RESOURCES HAVE PROJECTS FOUND TO BE USEFUL?

- Clean Energy Works Portland energy efficiency pilot project:
www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/betterbuildings/neighborhoods/pdfs/portland_pilot_evaluation_research_report_clean_energy_works.pdf



“Acquired data will establish a baseline for future projects.”

Climate Showcase Communities project lead

“Don’t be afraid to tweak the program if you see that it’s not working!”

Lindsay, Eugene SmartTrips, Oregon