

Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition Principles for Community Energy Sustainability

Local governments are increasingly aware of the critical roles that energy (including electricity, heating, and cooling) plays in building and maintaining sustainable communities; the environmental implications of centralized electricity production from fossil and nuclear sources, and of power delivery over long distances; the major contribution of energy activities to greenhouse gas emissions and associated climate change; the looming limitations on conventional resource supplies and infrastructure that demand more efficient resource use; and the potential to capture clean energy from community resources (such as sunlight, wind, and water) and waste streams (from landfills, wastewater treatment plants, agriculture, dairy farming, and other sources) that otherwise entail substantial disposal costs and environmental degradation.

Local governments can increase their influence on the impacts, availability and reliability of future energy use in California by speaking with one voice at regional, state, and federal venues. The Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition proposes the following basic principles as a foundation for planning and action to secure a sustainable energy future for our communities and the larger regions they comprise.

1. Local governments should recognize energy as a critical element of community planning, health and prosperity, and should dedicate community resources to understanding energy issues and influencing their outcome.
2. Local governments should develop, acquire, and apply the expertise needed to plan, advocate, and implement energy initiatives that strengthen their communities and contribute to regional energy capacity.
3. Local governments should proactively identify and develop community resources that enhance clean, efficient energy usage, supply, and delivery.
4. Local governments recognize the strong linkage between energy-related activities, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change concerns, and should ensure not only that community energy usage, supply, and delivery do not exacerbate these problems, but contribute to their solution.
5. Communities should recognize their individual responsibility and seize the opportunity to supplement conventional forms of energy supply and delivery with local resources that reduce energy consumption and peak demand, increase clean, efficient and renewable supply, diversify the resource base, integrate community needs, and strengthen local self-reliance and emergency response.
6. Local and regional entities should commit to implementing a preferred 'loading order' for energy resources, according the highest priority to energy efficiency and demand response, then to renewable resources and distributed generation such as combined heat and power, then to clean and efficient fossil-fired generation and improved delivery infrastructure.
7. Communities should redouble efforts to integrate local and regional energy usage, production, and delivery systems with other community initiatives such as zoning, green building standards, waste disposal, transportation, economic and redevelopment.
8. Community energy initiatives should take advantage of distinctive community and regional resources, recognizing that differing local circumstances support differing approaches to energy sustainability.
9. Local and regional governments should actively support and participate in effective joint representation before government agencies responsible for energy policy and implementation, and should advocate for and protect community interests in sustainable energy alternatives.