



Community Carbon Footprint

WHAT IS IT?

A community carbon footprint defines the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced in a defined geographic area. Considering that cities produce over 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, a baseline understanding of a city's emissions can help policymakers understand which strategies will be more effective and help cities be part of the solution.

Most cities partner with private consultants or non-profit organizations to complete the community carbon footprint, also referred to as a greenhouse gas inventory. The footprint analyzes emissions by sector, with the most common three sectors being transportation, energy, and materials, goods, and food. There are also two types of approaches. Both include emissions from consumption and production inside of the city; however, a sector-based approach includes GHG emissions from items produced in the city and exported elsewhere. On the other hand, a consumption-based approach includes emissions from imported products consumed within the city.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- With baseline information on the sources of greenhouse gas emissions, cities can create targeted strategies and actions to reduce emissions and part of the climate change mitigation solution.
- Baseline data can assist cities with goal-setting, allowing policymakers to analyze the feasibility of their sustainability goals and strategies needed to reach the targets.
- Data can provide an opportunity for community engagement. By having this data open to the public, there are opportunities for outreach programs to encourage residents to reduce their personal emissions.

BENEFITS



Cities can use a community carbon footprint to create policies that encourage or require emissions reduction projects in the highest-emitting sectors.



Gives the City government information on how to act on climate change locally



Shows residents the role they can specifically play in helping to reduce climate locally



Helps to engage the business community on the role they can play in reducing carbon emissions



Can provide information to industry to about their specific contribution and how to act to reduce climate change



Brings a data-driven approach to sustainability

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY?

Cities can utilize a community carbon footprint data set to create effective policies and community engagement opportunities to decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Choose a pathway to develop a greenhouse gas inventory for the city.** There are private consulting groups, non-profit organizations, and academics with mature models to conduct the inventory. Organizations, including ICLEI, CoolClimate Network, and ARUP, have online tools and programs to develop a community carbon footprint.
- **Utilize the data to create targeted strategies.** With benchmarking data for every sector, cities can analyze where a majority of their emissions are coming from and build an actionable roadmap based on these priority areas.
- **Create and maintain an open data portal with the greenhouse gas inventory.** By making this data accessible to the public, community members can be encouraged to take climate action. The site can also connect residents with information about action steps, including solar programs, alternative mobility options, or landfill diversion.
- **Increase community awareness through outreach and education.** Cities can use this community footprint data to encourage public participation in emissions reduction.