

Questions and Answers from the March 14 Webinar

Questions	Answers
Can our municipality use the trigger event worksheet as a template for our municipal decarbonization roadmap?	<i>The trigger event worksheet can be used as part of the municipal decarbonization roadmap, but it is not the only component.</i>
Are vehicles included in the roadmap, or only buildings?	<i>Vehicles are part of the roadmap, but an inventory is not needed.</i>
Will DOER put out a model ZEV policy resolution?	<i>There is a model ZEV Policy in our Climate Leaders website. See here: https://www.mass.gov/doc/climate-leader-communities-zev-first-policy/download</i>
Please explain the relationship, if any, between the Climate Leader program and a municipal electricity aggregation program. From a municipal perspective, it would be great to align these two programs to quantify total reduction in both energy use and GHGs.	<i>They are aligned and part of Climate Leader best practices. One of these practices is to adopt municipal aggregation with the option to have 100% renewable energy.</i>
If all these goals and roadmap apply to municipal buildings and vehicles only, what will be the plan for individual residents to that net zero in 2050 can be achieved?	<i>Another best practice is to have a climate action plan or net zero plan that includes a community engagement process promoting the availability and incentives for electric vehicles, home weatherization, and decarbonized heating and cooling.</i>
Might replacing windows become incentivizes as part of this program?	<i>This is something under consideration</i>
Are schools required to be part of the Decarbonization Roadmap if the town is a part of a regional school district and all the schools are not part of the Green Communities baseline?	<i>If none of the regional schools are part of the baseline, then they do not need to be included. However, given the large carbon footprint of school facilities, communities are encouraged to include them in their baselines and decarbonization roadmaps.</i>
How do meet these goals when we cannot get out utility to allow more solar and when asked about a geothermal network, we are told there are no plans. We have a solar plan and a decarbonization plan but cannot move forward with them.	<i>We expect as the Electric Sector Modernization Plans (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/electric-sector-modernization-plan-resources) are implemented these delays will ease. We suggest concentrating more on building and vehicle decarbonization before moving forward with renewable energy.</i>
Could you please reiterate steps of getting Climate Leaders designation. Is the technical assistance application the first step and is it required? Can a municipality apply for designation without the technical assistance?	<i>Applying for technical assistance is not necessary and once the emissions reduction forecasting capabilities in MassEnergyInsight are deployed, municipalities can produce the information needed for their roadmaps on their own. The town can meet the criteria in any order.</i>
What documents are required when community decides to purchase a vehicle to comply with the Zero Emissions policy? Is there any additional paperwork?	<i>No. Purchases are tracked through Mass Energy Insight.</i>
Can you share info about Climate Leader application process? Is it rolling that opens in late July? Is there a deadline for the first cohort?	<i>The deadline for the first cohort is July 25, 2024, and Dec 31, 2024, for second group.</i>
We have a building which already has major reduction in energy intensity before 2022. Will this be considered when looking at decarbonization?	<i>Since 2022 is the baseline for all decarbonization plans, energy reductions before his year will not be considered.</i>
Our community is halfway finished with our first Climate Action Plan (CAP) and we will be working to align it to fit the roadmap but we are using a baseline of 2017. Is our CAP eligible for consideration if the roadmap is not using 2022 as base?	<i>All roadmaps have to use 2022 as the baseline year. You can still use strategies identified in your CAP in the roadmap, but using 2022 emissions.</i>
What is assumption for community engagement under initial certification? Is that where community participation comes into play? We do not have staff to help with that effort.	<i>Community engagement can be variety of options. For example, it can be a new or extended Mass Save Community First partnerships, a new municipal aggregation, or holding an energy fair. Grant funding will be available to support these efforts.</i>

Will the state provide guidance on what a Climate Action Plan should include?	<i>Not at this time, since our criteria do not require a CAP. We will have a template or prototype for the municipal decarbonization roadmap. A CAP is community wide and goes beyond energy. There are many examples of CAPs by Massachusetts municipalities online.</i>
Our municipality is voluntarily purchasing extra MA Class 1 Renewable Energy Certificates with our electricity supply above Renewable Portfolio Standard. Will towns that voluntary purchase RECs count toward GHG reduction?	<i>No, although it is encouraged. We are focusing on on-site GHG reduction.</i>
What energy inspection is required for municipal buildings when they don't get HERS inspections?	<i>Inspections are not required.</i>
Can schools be included in the decarbonization roadmap if it will be demolished and replaced in few years.	<i>The demolition and replacement will be part of the roadmap as 'trigger events'.</i>
Why does the Program Opportunity Notice for the Climate Leaders roadmap prioritize municipalities who have met four of the requirements while those who have five are not – especially if the remaining requirement is the roadmap?	<i>The 5th criterion is the roadmap, so communities with 4 requirements – and just need to have the roadmap completed – are prioritized. Those who have fulfilled all five criteria by definition will have a roadmap already, so don't need assistance.</i>
Do you anticipate that roadmap assistance will cover all costs, and is there any cost share?	<i>The municipality may bear the cost of labor of drafting the plan.</i>
What can Climate Leader grants be used for? Can you provide examples and limitations?	<i>The grant program has not been fully approved by DOER leadership. Grants will focus on supporting solar and storage, solar canopies, and decarbonizing buildings.</i>
Has there been changes in MSBA policies regarding municipalities that have adopted the Specialized Stretch Code? Are there any estimates as to how much more grant funding might be available?	<i>MSBA provides an additional 3 percentage points in funding for schools built to the specialized stretch code.</i>
Will there be greater funding for decarbonizing historic municipal buildings what are often expensive to retrofit?	<i>Funding supporting decarbonizing historic buildings will be available; the unique characteristics of historic buildings will be taken into consideration</i>
Is the application deadline to apply for designation the same as outlined on the slide 7/25 and 12/31, or rolling? When will application be available on MEI?	<i>We are finalizing the application; it will be live soon. Applications can be submitted afterward, with deadlines for each cohort on 7/25 and 12/31.</i>
Please reiterate the projects would be eligible for grant funding after climate leaders designation.	<i>Capacity building and non-capital-intensive projects such as outreach, as well as capital projects (accelerator grant) including renewable energy and building decarbonization.</i>
Are properties excluded from the Green Communities baseline included in the Climate Leaders baseline?	<i>Yes.</i>
What is the April 12 deadline?	<i>That is the technical assistance application for decarbonization roadmaps. The Program Opportunity Notice is available here:</i>
	https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-24-1041-ENE01-ENE01-99326&external=true&parentUrl=close
If applying for the fall deadline, can you submit materials between 7/25 and 12/31? Will designation be determined and announced on a rolling basis or after 12/31?	<i>Applications can be submitted at any time, announcements are made after each deadline.</i>
Can you apply for planning assistance if our municipality has not yet passed the Specialized Stretch Code?	<i>Yes, you will likely receive the technical assistance but will be slightly lower priority.</i>
How complicated is the application since there is a short time frame to apply?	<i>It is quite straightforward: we require a letter from the CEO affirming that the municipality will meet all criteria within a year, documentation that the municipality has an energy committee, and information on facility energy use (screenshot from MEI)</i>
Did the original deadline of 6/30 get moved?	<i>Yes. It is now 7/25.</i>
It sounds like Climate Leaders Program Opportunity Notice will be issued separately from the Green Communities PON. Can a community apply to Climate Leaders grant if they have an active Green Communities grant?	<i>Yes, the Program Opportunities Notices are separate.</i> <i>We cannot confirm if a community with an open Green Communities grant will be eligible for a Climate Leader Accelerator grant, as they are still under development. However, it is under consideration.</i>
Can we work on the Decarbonization Roadmap and Climate Action Plan in parallel? Or is it recommended that the roadmap be done ahead of CAP?	<i>We cannot give advice on this issue, but we do encourage doing both if you have the resources.</i>

Who is responsible for ensuring that utilities can keep up with increasing electricity demand as more Climate Leaders get designated Is it the municipalities, or is DOER taking responsibility?	DOER is working with utilities to develop Energy Sector Modernization Plans (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/electric-sector-modernization-plan-resources) that plan how the grid will be upgraded to handle greater electricity demand.
What does adoption of a Climate Action Plan mean? Once the town or committee has written it, who needs to adopt it formally? Our climate resolution adopted at town meeting required writing a CAP. Is there another step?	<i>We believe you meant the decarbonization commitment. There are several ways to achieve this. A resolution can be adopted at town meeting. We recommend working with your Regional Coordinator to see if you have satisfied this requirement already.</i>
What will be the frequency of grant cycle for Climate Leader grant awards? Are they annual?	<i>They will likely be annual for the accelerator (capital) grants.</i>
Will the accelerator grant also cover costs that lower barriers to decarbonization such as deferred maintenance?	<i>We are unsure about the "deferred maintenance" issue, but the grants will support pre-electrification activities including electrical upgrades, development of specifications and design, and weatherization.</i>
Is the accelerator grant additional funding on top of competitive grant?	<i>Yes.</i>
Has roadmap grant application been posted yet?	<i>Yes. See here: https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-24-1041-ENE01-ENE01-99326&external=true&parentUrl=close</i>
Do we need a town resolution passed to create municipal decarbonization plan?	<i>No, but we do need proof of a decarbonization commitment as part of the other criteria.</i>
If we apply for the first round and are denied, do we need to apply again for the second round?	<i>We do not expect denying applications, but you might be later in the award timeline (further down the priority list).</i>
Will a community need to attach the decarbonization roadmap as part of the application?	<i>For certification, yes.</i>
What information is required for documenting kitchen equipment in the roadmap? Is it commercial equipment in schools, or small fridges and microwaves in department buildings?	<i>These do not need to be included. We are more concerned about equipment using fossil fuels such as heating and hot water equipment.</i>
For communities that have received the \$500,000 decarbonization grant and are under a two-year moratorium for Green Communities grants, will Climate Leader designation allow access to grants during this period?	<i>We will consider this.</i>
If there is a commitment to eliminate on-site fossil fuel by 2050 in our CAP but it is currently in draft form could this count toward criteria 3 for roadmap assistance?	<i>We will consider this as part of the application, but just provide an explanatory note that it is still in draft form.</i>
Is the Climate Leaders certification/decarbonization assistance application on a pass/fail basis?	<i>There is no pass/fail on the assistance, but orders of priority. On certification, we highly recommend working with your Regional Coordinator to submit a complete application.</i>
Can you confirm that two commitments are required for the Road Map application – one for going fossil-fuel free by 2050 and one to apply to Climate Leaders w/in a year or so?	<i>Yes. We require a decarbonization commitment as part of the designation application, and a commitment to achieve all criteria for climate leaders as part of the roadmap assistance.</i>