

# DEVELOPING A REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTREACH AND EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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## Summary of Existing Programs

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Climate, Energy & Environment Policy Committee Meeting  
Agenda Item 4

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# Agenda

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- Background
- Approach
- Regional Climate Program Research Highlights and Observations
- Questions and Discussion
- Next Steps

# Background

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- In May of 2024, ACPAC submitted a memo to the Climate, Energy, and Environmental Policy Committee detailing “Recommendations on Regional Action to Match Urgency and Magnitude of Climate Change”
- A core recommendation was to: *help mobilize a massive, all-of-society climate protection effort through expanded and sustained outreach to decisionmakers and the general public in the Metropolitan Washington region*
- Climate education and outreach has typically been led by COG members with a more localized approach as opposed to a regional approach led by COG
- COG is utilizing engagement and outreach planning and efforts as a part of the U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program as an opportunity to determine how to address ACAPC’s request with CEEPC members

# Approach

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- Identify existing climate/sustainability education and outreach campaigns or programs in the region
- Inventory topics/priorities, tools, audiences, messaging, EJ/LIDAC considerations, etc
- Analyze and document gaps in climate/sustainability subject matter, areas where programs do not exist are or are not as robust, etc., with a focus on EJ/LIDAC considerations
- Seek CEEPC feedback on what is wanted/needed regionally
- Incorporate missing elements and CEEPC preferences into a new Climate Education and Outreach Campaign, which will be to meet requirements for CPRG LIDAC engagement and can be leveraged and used more broadly in a sustained effort

# Existing Regional Climate Program Research Highlights and Observations

# Regional Climate Program Definition



## SCOPE

A climate or sustainability program, initiative, plan, or activity with education or outreach efforts for the public.



**AND**



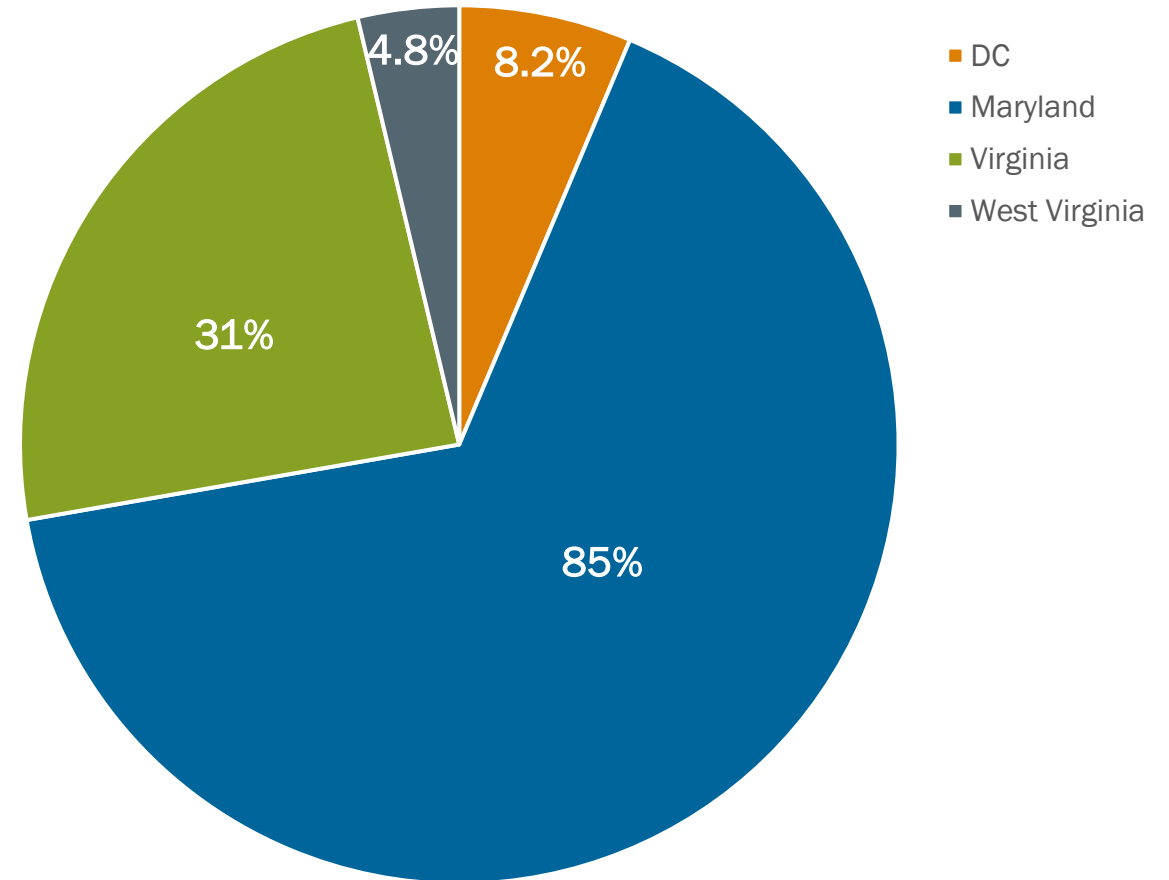
## FOCUS AREAS

Jurisdictions in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-MD-WV MSA. Energy Efficiency, Sustainability/Resilience Planning, Renewable Energy, Transportation, Nature-Based, or Environmental Justice.



# Regional Climate Programs Research Overview

- Initial research of nearly 150 entities researched to date
- Majority are organized and implemented by government agencies followed by utilities, non-profit partnerships, and collaborations with colleges/universities
- Target audiences include community members, homeowners/renters, utility customers, and businesses



# Sustainable DC

## Overview:

Sustainable DC is a DOEE initiative to make the District “the healthiest, greenest, most livable city for all residents by 2032”

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Action plan, monthly newsletter, annual progress reports, volunteer opportunities, videos, educational materials, and 10 program offerings
- Strong branding and social media presence with dedicated X/Twitter and Facebook accounts
- Goals to ensure every section of the plan is equitable, and that community engagement efforts are focused on communities that have been historically underrepresented
- Topics include climate change, the green economy, going green, energy, education, food, health, nature, transportation, waste, and water
- The effort is a collaboration between 25 DC government agencies, with plans to expand partnerships to federal and regional government and the private sector



November 2024



*Image Credit: District Department of Transportation*

Since the 2022 release of the [Transportation Electrification Roadmap](#), there have been several developments on the path to transitioning vehicles in the District off of fossil fuels and on to electricity which can come from clean, renewable sources. Last month, the District Department of Transportation announced the first conditional awards to build electric vehicle charging stations as part of the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program. In addition, the Department of Energy and Environment is spearheading an effort to repair and upgrade a charging station in Ward 7 that is not working and received funding to install two solar-powered, battery-connected chargers in Anacostia and Benning Ridge. Improving charging infrastructure paves the way for reaching the goal of 25% of vehicles registered in the District being zero-emissions by 2030.



# Montgomery Energy Connection (MEC)

## Overview:

The Montgomery Energy Connection is funded by the proceeds of the Pepco-Exelon merger and focuses on educating communities about the benefits of energy efficiency, available programs, and assistance options

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Monthly “Illumination Station” tabling events, monthly newsletter, “Energy Stories” blog posts, “My Energy” Toolkit, and annual energy summit
- Dedicated Instagram account promoting energy-saving tips and tricks and how-to videos
- Education is focused on residents, renters, and homeowners, with materials in English and Spanish; the website offers translation to over 30 languages
  - “Keep Your Power On” Toolkit offers assistance to households after they have received turn-off notices, available in Spanish
- Resource topics include helping pay bills, using less energy at home, helping pay for projects, switching to renewable energy, and electrifying your home
- Partnered with a network of over 65 organizations, including local agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, and utility providers, to reach County residents

## 2017-2022 Outreach Campaign Results



# Prince George's Community College, Sustainable Energy and Workforce Development Program

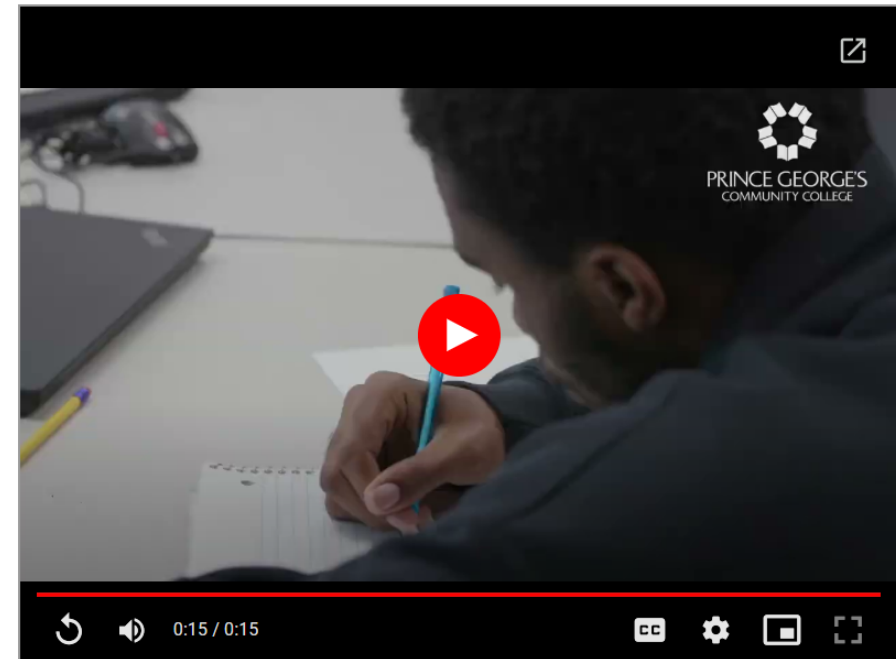
## Overview:

Renewable energy courses to build skills and advance careers in the emerging sector

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Tuition-free courses to remove financial barriers
- The program has a promotional video to reach interested students
- Education and outreach are geared toward job seekers
- Course topics include electric vehicle prep, solar, building science, and a home improvement certification
- In partnership with The Department of Environment – Sustainable Energy

Are you interested in advancing your career in the sustainable energy field? Register for tuition-free renewable energy courses to build your skills and advance your career in this emerging industry sector.



# Prince George's County Climate Action Commission

## Overview:

Commission established to develop a Climate Action Plan for Prince George's County

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Website with a climate action plan and a section to learn more about climate change in general
- Use of a Climate Action Plan Virtual Open House to reach a wider audience
- Education geared toward the public interested in commission recommendations and presentations to view and download
- Flyers and handouts available in English and Spanish
- In partnership with the Prince George's County Council

## Climate Action Commission



The Prince George's County Council established The Prince George's Climate Action Commission with Council Resolution [CR-07-2020](#) to develop a Climate Action Plan for Prince George's County to prepare for and build resilience to regional climate change impacts, and to set and achieve climate stabilization goals.

## MEETING INFORMATION

Spanish Version is available [HERE](#) !

# City of Fredericksburg, Virginia– Environmental Sustainability Program

## Overview:

The program is aimed at environmental public education, moving forward energy initiatives with local facilities, and developing resiliency projects

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Dedicated program coordinator is available to assist residents and other staff in supporting specific program navigation/troubleshooting, educational events, and print/digital educational materials
- Information shared with specific FXBG branding and initiative-specific hashtags on the City of Fredericksburg [X/Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and informational videos on [YouTube](#)
- Education focused on residents, renters, homeowners, electric vehicle drivers/owners, and solar panel users with materials in both English and Spanish

- Topics include green energy, environmental action, green incentives, rebates, sustainable waste management, water resources, and local food systems
- Partnership with the City Council, Clean & Green Commission, Department of Public Works, and area nonprofits





# Resilient Fairfax

## Overview:

A plan and a program to help Fairfax County adapt and become more resilient to changing climate-related conditions

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Climate Action Plan, Climate Action Dashboard with metrics, Resilient Fairfax overview presentation, videos, resiliency checklist, interactive climate change map, resource pages per audience, one-pagers in English and Spanish, and a speaker request option
- Dedicated Facebook and X accounts and “The County Conversation Podcast” hosted on SoundCloud
- Education focused on residents, businesses, and community organizations
- The plan and strategies incorporate the One Fairfax policy, which commits Fairfax County to intentionally consider equity when delivering policies, programs and services

- Topics include the effects of climate change, such as extreme heat, severe storms, and flooding
- In partnership with the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination, established in 2019



# Solarize VA

## Overview:

A community-based outreach initiative that aims to be a one-stop shop for education and installation for solar in Northern VA

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Comprehensive FAQ section on solar, a testimonial page, free assessments, and a resource page about solar tax credits and incentives
- Use of YouTube to host solar-related webinars
- Education focused on homeowners throughout Northern, Southeastern, and Central Virginia, as well as Lynchburg, Roanoke, and surrounding counties
- Topics include all things solar from education to installation
- Program is managed by a non-profit, Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), and partners with NVRC, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Piedmont Environmental Council, and over 20 municipal partners across the state to spread the word about the program



# Sustainable Maryland



## Overview:

Certification program for municipalities interested in accessing training and tools to develop local programs to save residents money and promote sustainable practices. 40 localities are currently certified.

## Key education and outreach tools and tactics:

- Monthly webinars with rotating topics, annual virtual workshops, regional summits, monthly newsletter, “Equity in Action” toolkit and corresponding database, and training for municipal staff.
- Facebook page promoting upcoming in-person and virtual webinars and trainings, events hosted by other nonprofits, and other local happenings within their certified jurisdictions
- Education focused on helping municipalities fund sustainable initiatives with grants, Certification action toolkits to get areas certified, Maryland Smart Energy Communities (MSEC) program training, and technical assistance using or implementing all tools or training
- A collaboration of the Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at the University of Maryland and the Maryland Municipal League

# Key Observations and Gaps

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- Most resources are jargon-heavy and aimed toward those well-versed or experienced in the climate/sustainability realm
- There is a lack of consistent and targeted environmental justice, social justice, LIDAC focus and programming
- Majority of public education campaigns provided information and materials in English
- There was not always a clear call to action upfront and most sites had many pages and links to navigate to get to specific information (if you know what you are looking for)
- Many sites/materials did not clearly correlate how individuals, households, businesses, etc. contribute to climate change and what we can do to offset the impacts



# Key Observations and Gaps

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- Programs and materials could benefit from offerings “low hanging fruit” solutions upfront – smaller, more scalable actions that are more universal, accessible, and easily implementable by individuals (light bulb replacements, shopping in bulk, BYOB, composting, taking transit, etc.)
- More focus on specific, local impacts by region, locality, etc. would help the public relate more and perhaps encourage more action
- Rural initiatives tend to emphasize nature-based programming and preserving local natural resources
- Areas without a regional or local plan were less likely to have initiatives beyond tree planting, water conservation, recycling, and referrals to state or local non-profits

# Opportunities for COG Education and Outreach Initiative

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- Support specific partners with the development of easy-to-use graphics to help explain the impacts of climate change to the region so that it is more understandable - offer customizable template and materials
- Focus a portion of the content on specific actions low/moderate income households (including renters) can take to be more green/sustainable
- Offer material transcreation and translation expertise for languages other than English so partners' public education materials are more accessible to non- English speaking community members
- Include recommendations for partners on best practices for designing and implementing successful outreach in a toolkit with customizable templates
  - Survey developed by COG to participants asking what materials will be most beneficial in advance of toolkit development
- Leverage Green Teams and other councils or committees to identify specific Environmental Justice needs across the region and offer climate messaging development expertise and testing materials with diverse audiences

# Questions, Discussion, and Next Steps

# Questions and Discussion

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- Questions or comments from CEEPC members on the research and observations presented
- Is CEEPC interested in:
  - Reviewing the research done to date (*note may not be entirely comprehensive*)
  - Exploring a regional climate outreach and education program or changes to how outreach and education are going now? For example:
    - COG (individually or in partnership) can take a more active role in broad public climate outreach and education through campaigns, events, and resources (e.g., similar to Clean Air Partners), **and/or**
    - COG can provide more support through resources and toolkits for COG members and partners to use with decision makers and local constituents, **and/or**
    - COG can run outreach and engagement programs for specific topical areas that are critical for regional collaboration
    - Other ideas from CEEPC members?

# Next Steps

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- Summary of what was heard today

**If you have additional thoughts after today please reach out to Jeff King to discuss by January 31, 2025**

- Finish and share existing programs mapping for climate outreach and education with CEEPC
- Incorporate ideas from today into CPRG outreach and engagement plan
- Incorporate missing elements and CEEPC preferences into a new Climate Education and Outreach Campaign, which will be to meet requirements for CPRG LIDAC engagement and can be leveraged and used more broadly in a sustained effort