

Alameda County Government Services and Operations Climate Action Plan

Public Engagement Summary | September 2021 to May 2022

Overview

For the development of the next Alameda County Climate Action Plan for Government Services and Operations (GOCAP), the County has solicited community feedback through four main channels: 1) an online public survey, 2) targeted community engagement efforts, in coordination with community-based organizations consisting of four focus groups or listening sessions and one in-person survey, 3) two virtual public workshops, and 4) an online feedback tool.

- The **targeted community engagement efforts** conducted in collaboration with community-based organizations solicited feedback from communities likely to be most affected by climate change, including older adults, unhoused residents, people with limited English proficiency, residents with pre-existing health conditions, and uninsured and underinsured individuals. These events were held in collaboration with Healthcare for the Homeless (a program of Alameda County), La Clínica de la Raza, My Eden Voice, and Roots Community Health Center.
- The **public survey** was open from September 7 to 30, 2021 and received a total of 1,217 responses (1,158 in English, 45 in Chinese, and 14 in Spanish). The survey asked respondents about their understanding of climate change, priorities for County services and goals, and other ideas and opinions related to the GOCAP development. A similar but shorter door-to-door survey was also conducted in collaboration with My Eden Voice and received 97 responses (31 translated from Mandarin, and 39 in Spanish).
- The **first virtual public workshop** was hosted on November 18, 2021 and focused on soliciting feedback from the community on draft GOCAP actions and overarching priorities, interests, and concerns related to the GOCAP. The **second virtual public workshop** was hosted on May 11, 2022 and supported participants in using the online feedback tool to provide feedback on proposed GOCAP measures.
- The **online feedback tool** was open from April 19 to May 17, 2022 and received active participation from 80 community members. The online tool enabled participants to rate their support for specific draft measures, comment on the pros and cons of draft measures, and propose new measures.
- In addition, a dedicated phone line and email was made available for comments at any time.

This document summarizes outcomes for the public engagement process that involved the support of Cascadia Consulting Group. More detailed outcomes can be found at <https://www.acgov.org/sustain/what/climate/22plan.htm>. Additional outreach was done without Cascadia's support when the draft plan was shared for input in November 2022.

Engagement Snapshot

Format	Description	Participants
Listening Sessions	Listening sessions facilitated with Healthcare for the Homeless and My Eden Voice	23
Focus Group Discussions	Focus group discussions facilitated with La Clínica de la Raza and Roots Community Health Center	14
Public Survey (Online)	Online community survey open during the month of September, available in English, Spanish, and Chinese	1,217
Public Survey (Door-to-Door)*	Door-to-door community survey conducted by My Eden Voice in September and October, available in English, Spanish, and Mandarin	97
Public Workshop #1	Online community workshop focused on soliciting feedback on GOCAP goals, priorities, and draft actions	44
Public Workshop #2	Online community workshop focused on soliciting feedback on GOCAP measures through the Consider.It online tool	26
Online Feedback Tool*	Online forum for voting and comments using Consider.It platform	80

*Findings analyses from these engagement channels was carried out by the Alameda County Office of Sustainability.

Key Takeaways

Across engagement channels, key themes and takeaways arose related to the Alameda County community's goals, priorities, and concerns related to climate change and the GOCAP:

- Participants' **vision for Alameda County** in 2030 involves a community that is safe, welcoming, economically vibrant, on track with climate goals, improving public transportation, and centering environmental justice. Participants want their communities to have more open and green spaces, cleaner air, fewer cars, and community centers for extreme heat days and information on disasters. Key concerns and priorities were health, housing, and safety, with highest priority **Vision 2026 goals** of eliminating homelessness, eliminating poverty and hunger, and healthcare for all.
- Across engagement channels, participants **support bold County climate action**. Most participants believe Alameda County's emission reduction goals and climate preparedness efforts should be either **more ambitious** or **on par with other Bay Area local governments**.
- Participants across engagement channels identified **equity** as key to the success of the GOCAP planning process and implementation. Most participants expressed the importance of **prioritizing GOCAP actions that support social equity and vulnerable community members**.
- Alameda County residents are **very concerned** about climate change impacts. Many participants have experienced **smoky air** and **extreme temperatures and heat waves** in Alameda County and identify wildfire, smoky air, and power shutoffs as some of the most concerning climate impacts.
- In addition to the climate impacts listed above, Alameda County residents face **challenges** related to cost of living, mental health, lack of parks and green spaces, inflation and increased prices, and food insecurity.
- Some of the greatest **opportunities** that participants noted for the County to address climate change through its services and operations include electrification of County buildings and transportation, addressing employee transit (such as through telecommuting), coordination across jurisdictions and agencies, providing shade and trees on County lands, and providing resilient County services in the face of climate impacts.
- Some of the draft measures with the **strongest community support** on the online feedback tool include alternative commute incentives, edible food recovery, energy efficiency, electric vehicles, telework expansion, and water conservation.

Recommendations for County Services

Throughout the engagement process, community members shared ideas and recommendations for the County to improve its services and climate action and resilience efforts:

- Ensure maximum **accessibility of County services**, such as through longer hours, weekend hours, digital services, and language accessibility.
- **Prioritize equity and the needs of vulnerable, frontline, and at-risk populations and communities.** Some recommendations from participants include paying local Indigenous communities to lead climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, including input from BIPOC and disabled communities and organizations in the GOCAP, continuing to provide translation and interpretation for outreach materials and events, prioritizing the shift to electric vehicles in locations that currently experience more air pollution, not requiring documentation for those without addresses for job training, providing pathways to green jobs for people without college degrees, and seeking out and supporting young people's voices and leadership potential.
- **Build trust** with local frontline communities. Participants in focus groups and listening sessions shared that the County needs to work on building and maintaining trust with communities, which could be aided by more individualized and responsive County social services and by the County's following up on promises and commitments made to communities.
- Provide **emergency preparedness information, education**, and as many **tools and resources** as possible. The County could provide more mental health services, community centers, and monetary support and resources for communities in relation to emergency response.

Recommendations for Implementation

Input from the public and lessons learned from public engagement process support the following engagement recommendations for GOCAP implementation:

- **Continue to partner and build relationships with local communities and community organizations.** Partnerships with CBOs are critical in ensuring that voices from frontline communities are heard and considered.
- **Ensure accessibility, including providing communications and engagement materials in multiple languages.** Most engagement opportunities were offered in Mandarin (or traditional Chinese for written materials) and Spanish. A focus group and a listening session were held in Spanish. Google Translate was made available for all web sites. A multi-lingual approach should continue during GOCAP implementation, tailored to the communities relevant to that project.
- **Provide multiple pathways and platforms to engage**, including virtual, in-person, written, and verbal methods that meet people where they are. When seeking input from the community, joining existing community meetings may be a more effective approach than scheduling dedicated workshops.
- **Offer compensation for participant and CBO time** to acknowledge their lived experience and expertise and support their participation.
- **Engage with the community early on in the process.** Early engagement allows community input and ideas to be better incorporated into planning processes and builds stronger partnerships for implementation.
- **Follow up with past participants.** It is important to let participants know their input was registered. During the public engagement process, the County created an email list for community members who would like to receive updates on plan development. List members can continue to be notified of plan updates and opportunities for engagement.