

In November, Australia's deputy Prime Minister described those making the link between climate change and bush fires as "[inner-city raving lunatics.](#)" We can report some progress. His boss, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, now acknowledges the link (although he wants to maintain current policies).

As climate impacts become more extreme and obvious, more jurisdictions, from cities and townships to states and nations want to take greater action more quickly. But, how? Marin County in Northern California is at the forefront of trying to figure that out. Marin started [Drawdown Marin](#) "to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change impacts," hired a full-time project manager for the effort, and created six citizen groups focused on six topics: Renewable Energy, Transportation, Buildings + Infrastructure, Carbon Sequestration, Local Food + Food Waste, and Climate Resilient Communities.

Marin is working through many of the difficult issues faced by any community that wants to act aggressively on climate. [Project Climate](#) at UC Berkeley's Center for Law, Energy, and Environment sent graduate student Sadie Frank to Marin to evaluate some of the challenges and opportunities. Sadie focused primarily on the difficult set of issues around governance - structural, financial, and managerial. These turn out to be linchpins to meaningful actions and progress.

Climate action at any level of government requires commitment, funding, decision-making, policy, and structure. For example, should the driver for climate action in the jurisdiction be the government itself, a public-private partnership, a non-profit organization, a joint powers authority, a special district, or some other legal entity? What legal authority does it need? How will decisions be made across government departments, among multiple jurisdictions, or with potentially divergent citizen's groups? In conjunction with the structure of the climate action organization, the jurisdiction must determine how it will finance actions, with funding from government sources, private donations, and other financing options. In addition, the jurisdiction needs a clear decision-making process and oversight authority for projects that it approves and funds.

Sadie concludes that flexibility for funding (both in receiving and dispersing funds) is essential, along with transparency. Flexibility and transparency are also key for decision-making, with a recognition that not all actions will be equally effective. A transparent process will, however, identify risks and rewards and promote broad participation.

Marin, as a first-mover, will help other jurisdictions recognize barriers and find solutions. Project Climate will continue to work with Marin and report its findings. We will post Sadie's findings on the Project Climate website shortly.