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In the arc of climate action, we are firmly in the era of implementation. As climate change accelerates, communities across the state are experiencing the effects of a changing climate. To avoid the worst of these impacts, it is critical that we rapidly ***implement*** actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to the effects of a changing climate. Meeting this challenge requires implementation to be a priority at all levels of government.

Local governments – cities, counties, and special districts – are critical for successful implementation for several reasons. Local governments have been leaders in charting the path on local climate action – dating back to the commitments by mayors in the early 2000s. Cities and counties frequently have both direct authority and enabling power to drive policy implementation within their jurisdictions. In addition, they are often best positioned to assess the climate risks and vulnerabilities most relevant to their communities.

To understand the status of climate action at the local level in California, CLEE partnered with the Institute of Local Government, with the support of Next 10, to survey cities, counties, and special districts. We designed the survey to provide insight on the status of climate action planning efforts and policy implementation; identify opportunities and barriers to move from planning to implementation; and increase our understanding of resource constraints, barriers, and opportunities to advance action. Today, CLEE, ILG, and Next 10 jointly released a report summarizing the results of the survey.

Just over one-third of California cities and counties responded to the survey, representing over half of the State's population. Because a smaller number of special districts responded to the survey, the summary results only include responses from cities and counties. The survey finds that the responding jurisdictions are active in both planning and implementing climate action across all sectors. Not surprisingly, planning and implementation activity is higher in areas where the State has provided more direction to local government through laws and regulations.

Funding and local capacity remain the primary barriers to implementation of climate actions across all sectors

Climate action has seen historic investments at both the federal and state levels

over the past few years. However, accessing and implementing these funds remains a challenge. Responding jurisdictions were most likely to identify funding and staff capacity as the barriers to moving an action from the planning to the implementation stage. Jurisdictions were also likely to identify community and stakeholder engagement as necessary for moving equity and environmental justice actions from planning to implementation.

Climate Action Plans are important, but not determinative of action

Approximately three-quarters of cities and counties have completed or are in the process of completing a Climate Action Plan (CAPs). CAPs are more common in larger and more wealthy jurisdictions. However, over one-half of responding jurisdictions without a CAP have included climate strategies in other planning documents – most commonly, the General Plan.

Climate actions with a focus on Equity and Environmental Justice are more frequently in the planning stage compared to sectoral actions

Responding jurisdictions reported slightly lower levels of implementation for equity and environmental justice actions, which are essential cross-cutting activities. Additional capacity building and targeted support are likely needed to move these activities into action. Responding jurisdictions have been the most active in implementing actions related to Transportation, Land Use, and Energy & Buildings.

Service programs add helpful capacity for climate action

AmeriCorps programs like CivicSpark and GrizzlyCorps place recent graduates in local governments and organizations to support climate action. Interviews with survey respondents indicate that these fellows have been very helpful in advancing climate actions. President Biden's recent announcement of the American Climate Corps will add additional capacity for local governments to access.

What the survey does not show us

The survey received a higher response rate from larger, wealthier, and coastal jurisdictions, which are traditionally the communities that have been more active on climate. Therefore, to develop a more complete picture of the status of climate action in California's local governments and to better understand localized resource needs, it will be necessary to develop additional tools to reach and survey a more

representative sample of jurisdictions.

The study was supported by and conducted in partnership with Next 10. Click here to read the report in full on Next 10's website.