

POLICY PRIMER: INCREASING RENEWABLE ENERGY

American
Cities Climate
Challenge

Bloomberg
Philanthropies

Fossil fuel consumption continues to drive the climate crisis—and most of that dirty energy is then used to power cities, the hubs of our social and economic activity. As such, cities have an outsized role to play in building our clean energy future. As part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies American Cities Climate Challenge, 25 cities are laying the groundwork for a world run on clean, renewable energy—while improving their residents' health and creating jobs along the way.

What steps are Climate Challenge cities taking?

Leading by example in their own municipal buildings by taking advantage of financial programs. Cities are reducing the financial barriers to their renewable energy projects by making use of financial programs like municipal bonds, energy-service performance contracts, green banks, and revolving loan funds.

Scaling up community solar. Not everyone can opt for solar: Some people rent their apartments, have roofs facing the wrong way, or find the up-front costs of solar installation prohibitive. To make solar more accessible, cities are now building out community solar farms that feed into the main electricity grid and allow for residents to pay for a certain number of panels each month, which is then reflected on their electricity bills.

Making buildings solar-ready. Clean, renewable energy can become the status quo! To help, cities can update codes that require new buildings to be optimized for solar panels from the start.

Signing power purchase agreements. If cities choose not to buy solar panels outright, they can sign power purchase agreements (PPAs), in which a third party owns the solar panels and sells the energy back to the city, usually at a fixed, reliable cost.



What are the benefits of increasing renewable energy?

Health. As fossil fuel consumption goes down, air quality goes up—and with it, the health of nearby residents, particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color who have long been exposed to disproportionate levels of pollution near conventional power plants and are now facing worse outcomes from COVID-19.

Money. Jobs! As the world recovers financially in the wake of the pandemic, our clean energy future offers a booming clean energy economy that includes everything from the manufacture and installation of solar panels and wind farms to the retrofitting of buildings. Clean energy also offers energy independence and energy security—rather than reliance on fossil fuels shipped from afar—and potential savings on our electricity bills.



Environment. Decreased fossil fuel use means less air pollution, fewer toxins, and a lower risk of contamination to nearby ecosystems and water supplies. And, of course, one of the biggest winners in the clean energy future is the climate!