

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES GRANTS: EMPOWERING WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATORS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Jacob Gardner

In the face of changing climate and environmental challenges, New York State has adopted an ambitious set of goals in 2019 to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and build a more sustainable future. Then in 2022 the Federal Government introduced the Inflation Reduction Act which included the single largest investment in climate and energy in American history. Combined, these two initiatives are creating infrastructure investment opportunities through increased funding.

New York's climate goals are lofty and some of the most aggressive in the country. Under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), the state aims to achieve the following by 2050: net-zero emissions, 100% clean electricity, energy efficiency across all sectors, renewable energy expansion, and the creation of economic opportunities in the "green" sector.

The water and wastewater industry plays a crucial role in both environmental protection and resource management, so it should come as no surprise that the industry stands to gain from the state and federal incentives laid to help municipalities adopt efficiency and sustainability projects.

One initiative of interest for the Water and Wastewater industry is New York's Climate Smart Community Grant Program. It is an initiative designed to support local communities. This program provides funding to municipalities and local governments to implement projects and initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience to climate impacts, and advance sustainable practices.

Two Reasons to participate in New York's Climate Smart Communities program:

- 1. Access to funding:** By participating in the Climate Smart Communities Program, municipalities gain access to funding opportunities and valuable resources. The program provides grants and technical assistance to support climate-related projects, helping municipalities implement sustainability and resilience initiatives that might otherwise be financially challenging.
- 2. Cost Savings and Efficiency:** Many actions taken under the Climate Smart Communities Program result in cost savings and increased operational efficiency. Measures such as energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy installations, and reduced water consumption can lead to lower utility bills, freeing up resources for other municipal priorities.

[More information about the climate smart communities program](#)



Energy efficiency is a win-win for water and wastewater operators. It not only reduces operational costs but also contributes to environmental sustainability and resilience. By conducting energy assessments, upgrading equipment, optimizing processes, and embracing advanced technologies, operators can unlock significant energy savings. Moreover, integrating renewable energy sources and fostering a culture of energy consciousness can further enhance sustainability.

If your municipality is creating or has created a climate smart task force it is important that you're represented in the meetings. Public works, wastewater, and water are the focus of many of the initiatives and it is better to be proactive in the decision process instead of reactive. New York Rural Water also offers several services that can aid your municipality in gaining the points needed to secure funding in the Climate Smart Community Grant Program. Our energy assessments are not being accepted towards that point total and could garner up to 16 points per assessment. One of the most achievable grants involves performing 5 climate smart actions and an assessment for your water and wastewater systems can count as two of those five actions. 💧💧

Jacob Gardner
Energy Efficiency Circuit Rider
gardner@nyruralwater.org

