

Norwalk, CA

City of Norwalk Participates in Cohort Training Model to Complete GHG Inventory

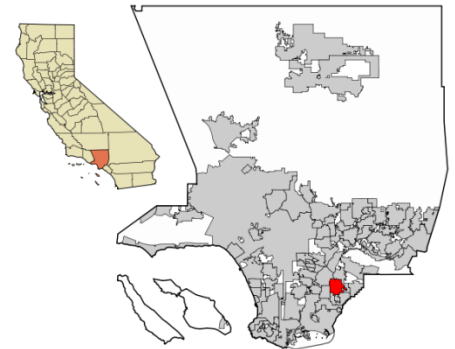
The City of Norwalk participated in the no-cost 2017 Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory Cohort Session with 19 other agencies across CA. With the help of their CivicSpark Climate Fellow, they were able to complete their GHG inventory for 2012.

Case study

November 2017

Summary

In 2017, ICLEI USA hosted the first SEEC GHG Emissions Inventory Cohort Session, a structured technical assistance program to guide California local governments through the steps of creating a basic community GHG inventory in real time. Twenty communities participated in the no-cost, 20-week program, which consisted of six online trainings and a self-paced online learning portal with assignments and resources. The City of Norwalk participated in the program with their CivicSpark AmeriCorps Fellow and was able to complete their GHG inventory for 2012. The structured cohort program allowed the City to save on consultant costs and bring in new technical knowledge to staff.



Population/land area

106,178 / 9.35 sq. mi

GHG Inventories Offer Cities Data for Decision Making for Sustainability

Conducting a GHG emissions inventory is one of the first steps in climate action for cities. Understanding where the emissions are coming from and at what magnitude allows a city to prioritize the biggest contributors. Furthermore, understanding the nature of the emission sources is important to developing the right strategies to reduce future emissions. For example, reducing tailpipe emissions from vehicles requires a different strategy than methane emissions from landfill waste. After an inventory is completed, it can be used to set targets, such as for emissions reductions or renewable energy generation, or report out to external platforms or stakeholders. Communicating the results of a completed inventory can be a useful strategy to changing behavior or inspiring innovation. There are some impacts of climate change that aren't easily or directly captured by measuring emissions, such as

disproportionate impact on different frontline communities or public health effects, but overall, the GHG emissions inventory is an important tool for measuring progress in sustainability and climate action.

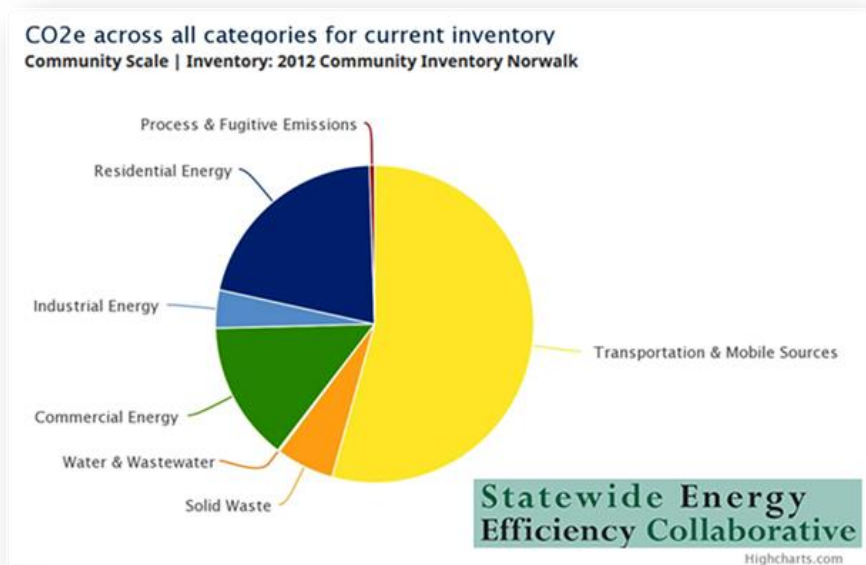
City Context

Located in the midst of some of Southern California's most accessible highways in the greater Los Angeles area, and only 17 miles southeast of Los Angeles, the 9.35 square miles that make up the City of Norwalk have become one of the most rapidly developing and growing communities anywhere in the state of California. Norwalk sits at the heart of an expanding regional transportation network which is an outstanding convenience to residents that work anywhere in Los Angeles or Orange Counties. Participating in the inaugural SEEC GHG Inventory Training Cohort Session to complete its GHG emissions inventory was the City of Norwalk's first step toward creating a climate action plan.

Cohort Training Model Profile

Housed under the SEEC program, the GHG Emissions Inventory Cohort Session was available at no cost to California jurisdictions. During this 20-week program, ICLEI USA assisted 20 cities, counties, and regional entities in the process of creating a basic community-scale GHG inventory following either the U.S. Community Protocol (USCP) or Global Protocol for Community-Scale Emissions (GPC) and using ICLEI USA's ClearPath online software platform for GHG emissions management. The session was designed for both communities developing their first inventory, and those that have previously completed an inventory but now wanted additional training to ensure a new inventory is

consistent with protocols and the most up-to-date best practices. Participants included the Cities of Norwalk, Rancho Cucamonga, San Leandro, Union City, Berkeley, Livermore, Sunnyvale, Fremont, Thousand Oaks, Dublin, Woodland, Ontario, San Anselmo, South Pasadena, Colton, Indio, and Albany, along with Santa Barbara County, Sonoma County, and San Luis Obispo County.




City of Norwalk's greenhouse gas emissions inventory work compiles data across multiple community sectors to produce a composite look at emissions activity in the city boundary. Graph produced by ClearPath, an ICLEI tool.

Over the course of the program, the participants went through six live, web-based trainings covering inventory scoping, data collection, data entry, reporting, and documentation on the primary sectors of waste, transportation, energy, and wastewater. Live webinar-style trainings offered direct support from ICLEI USA staff as well as peer exchange and learning. Recordings from the webinar trainings and self-paced resource materials were made available on the SEEC Learning Portal, newly launched in 2017, that broke down the inventory process step-by-step. Other resources included templates for data requests to different agencies, instructions on emissions factor and data cleaning calculations, and inventory report templates. ICLEI USA staff provided answers to questions and technical assistance offline and in one-on-one consultation. If participants were reporting to the leadership campaign Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, additional compliance checks were offered.

Results

The City of Norwalk housed a CivicSpark AmeriCorps Fellow for 2016-2017 whose project scope included attending the Session trainings and completing the City's inventory for the year 2012. With the Fellow's help, the City of Norwalk was able to successfully complete the inventory at the end of the GHG Inventory Cohort Session, the first city to finish in the cohort. Los Angeles County had completed inventories for every city in the county for the year 2010, so the City of Norwalk is able to compare their progress on emissions using the previous inventory as a baseline.

Because the CivicSpark Fellow was also working with the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG), the knowledge and lessons learned from the Cohort Session were transferred over to projects that the Fellow was working on more regionally. Specifically, the GCCOG is preparing a regional climate action planning (CAP) framework for its member cities in the coming year. This framework will be a jumping-off point for cities to develop their CAPs. Since inventories compile a host of essential metrics for communities tracking emissions, it was useful preparation for the GCCOG to participate in the process via the CivicSpark Fellow. Inventory best practices learned and data needs identified from the Cohort Session will be incorporated into the CAP framework.



“The SEEC Cohort Training program was really useful, and we wouldn't have been able to complete the inventory without it. Anytime we had a question, we were able to call up the ICLEI USA staff. The personal, one-on-one assistance was greatly helpful in walking through different problems and calculations.”

— Noe Diaz, CivicSpark Fellow, Gateway Cities Council of Governments

Budget and Finance

The SEEC GHG Inventory Cohort Session was open to participation by all California local governments at no cost via the SEEC partnership. The City of Norwalk was able to utilize its CivicSpark AmeriCorps Fellow to attend the webinar trainings and complete the inventory. This project was initially scoped for a consultant at \$70,000, so the city saved a significant amount through this no-cost program administered by ICLEI USA paired with AmeriCorps staffing contribution.

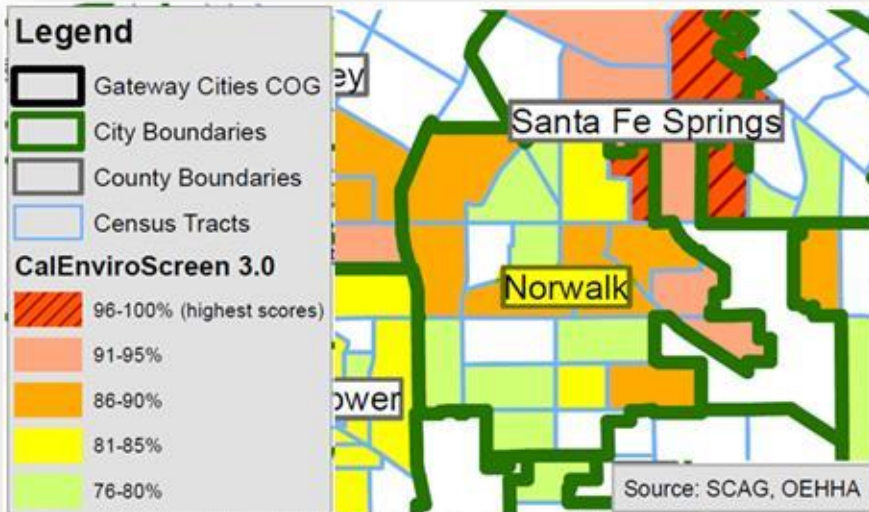
Lessons Learned

The inventory process was a huge learning curve for first-timers and having a guided step-by-step program and one-on-one assistance was crucial to the completion of the inventory.

The biggest challenge for participants was the amount of time required to become proficient with emissions inventory protocols and practice. Even with a dedicated CivicSpark Fellow, the City needed to allow for hours to learn these principles of the current industry standards. The SEEC Learning Portal, with its stepwise framework of tasks and checklist of steps, proved very helpful because the process was broken down into sector-based sections allowing for a systematized, clear and approachable format than what has ever been available to local governments before.

Hurdles came up in data collection phase of the work due to some data not being available. In some cases, it took weeks to receive data from a particular source. The transportation sector was particularly complex in the different ways one could get at the same answer. Furthermore, because the program was designed only to look at the primary sectors, there were some sectors that

were not addressed, such as fugitive emissions and other Scope 3 emissions — a term defined in the protocols referring to emissions sources considered categorically occurring outside of the jurisdiction boundary — generally due to data unavailability or complexity. Therefore, if the City wanted a more comprehensive inventory, they would need to do additional analysis on their own or with a consultant.



Using environmental, health, and socioeconomic information to produce scores for every census tract in the state, the CalEnviroScreen mapping tool helps identify California communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution, and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects. City of Norwalk has paired CalEnviroScreen results with GHG inventory data and emissions reduction measures to begin developing its climate action plan. Map produced by CalEnviroScreen.

Having a dedicated staff person for the project was a huge advantage for the program participation, allowing the City of Norwalk to do the assignments between trainings and come

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prepared for the next session.

Next Steps

The City of Norwalk currently is working with the new CivicSpark Fellow for 2017-2018 to create its 2016 emissions inventory. Utility data through 2016 has already been obtained and the previous Fellow was able to stay on at GCCOG and train the incoming Fellow on inventory calculations. Further steps may be taken with the Los Angeles County 2010 inventory to extract the raw data to upload into ClearPath. With the regional CAP framework being developed by GCCOG, the City of Norwalk's Planning Department is leading on CAP preparations for the City.



Supporting California local governments



City of Norwalk staff Christine Roberto and Noe Martinez staff a booth for a program to exchange incandescent holiday lights for energy efficiency LED light strands. Photo courtesy City of Norwalk.