



Science-Based Targets for U.S. Communities

Science-based targets (SBTs) are climate goals in line with the latest climate science. They represent your community's fair share of the ambition necessary to meet the Paris Agreement commitment to keep warming below **1.5 °C**. To achieve this goal, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that we must reduce global emissions by **50% by 2030** and achieve **climate neutrality by 2050**. This is why SBTs are often presented as 2030, or interim, targets. Equitably reducing global emissions by 50% requires that high-emitting, wealthy nations reduce their emissions by more than 50%.

Science-based targets build internal and external support needed to achieve ambitious greenhouse gas reductions and boost public confidence in local climate action. They show local governments what reduction is needed by 2030 and 2050, spurring innovation and collaboration.

Participation in the [Race to Zero](#), a global campaign led by the United Nations climate champions and in partnership with ICLEI, C40, CDP, World Resources Institute and more, requires cities to set a 2030 target, which "reflects maximum effort toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global reduction in CO₂ by 2030 identified in the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C."

Calculating a Science-Based Target

1. **Understand** science-based targets by reading the Science-Based Target (SBT) [guidance](#) developed by the partners of the Science Based Targets Network. This guide provides a valuable background to the Who, What, Why, and How of SBTs.

ICLEI USA support: By joining the ICLEI150 in the Cities Race to Zero, you will receive technical assistance to further understand and develop your community's SBT. Together, we will set an interim 2030 target that reflects maximum effort toward or beyond a fair share of your community's emissions reductions by 2030.

As an ICLEI USA member, you can access our "Science-Based Targets Guidance for Inventories" through [the ICLEI Community](#).





2. **Develop** or update your SBT utilizing one of the methodologies discussed in the [guidance](#).

ICLEI USA support: By joining the ICLEI150 in the Cities Race to Zero, our technical experts will calculate your community's SBT based on a completed 2015 or newer community greenhouse gas inventory in ClearPath, our climate planning tool. If you do not have an applicable inventory, ICLEI USA will help you to create or update one.

Using your community's 2030 science-based target and greenhouse gas profile, as well as our knowledge of your community priorities, ICLEI USA will develop high-impact actions to achieve your 2030 target. Once identified, ICLEI USA will provide technical assistance and workshops to help your team begin implementation.

ICLEI USA's calculation methodology is based on the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) [One Planet City Challenge \(OPCC\)](#). ICLEI USA chose this methodology because it is most compatible with our local governments' current methodologies, making it easier to integrate the target into current and future greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies.

3. **Report** your target by disclosing it in the CDP-ICLEI [Questionnaire](#). If your community does not have a target, please indicate why you have not yet set one in your response. The CDP will contact you following the disclosure deadline to support you with next steps in setting your target.

ICLEI USA support: By joining the ICLEI150 in the Cities Race to Zero, ICLEI USA will amplify your progress through our media and partner channels. Additionally, reporting your progress allows ICLEI USA and your team to co-develop the next steps in your Race to Zero journey.

4. **Receive** feedback from CDP and ICLEI USA, who will check targets for alignment with a fair share of emissions reduction in line with limiting global warming to 1.5 °C.
5. **Disclose** annually to monitor progress against your target.



ICLEI USA support: ICLEI USA will keep its members and ICLEI150 participants up to date in case targets need to be adapted to current climate science. Communities should also keep targets up-to-date based on progress.

ICLEI USA’s Science-Based Target Methodology

As the basis of its method, the World Wide Fund for Nature’s (WWF) [One Planet City Challenge](#) (OPCC) proposes to reduce baseline (2018) per capita emissions (scope 1 & 2) by 50%. This is then adjusted by Human Development Index correction factors to adjust for a jurisdiction’s fair share of emissions. This means jurisdictions in countries with higher HDIs (higher socio-economic development) must pursue stronger reductions and more ambitious High Impact Actions (HIAs) by 2030, allowing still-developing cities with lower HDIs to reduce less by the same year.

The foundation of ICLEI USA’s SBT calculation is based on the OPCC methodology. However, our methodology is adapted to fit our diverse network of local governments.

Key Differences in ICLEI USA’s Methodology:

- Baseline years range from 2016-2019
 - *Justification: Many local governments produce inventories every 2-5 years. We prefer the SBT baseline emissions to be precisely calculated rather than extrapolated based on a 2018 normalization.*
- Minimally-compliant inventories must be compliant with ICLEI USA’s [U.S Community Protocol](#) (USCP) or the [GPC](#) Basic reporting level.
 - *Justification: Many local governments within ICLEI USA’s network build inventories in compliance with the U.S Community Protocol. Other local governments build inventories in compliance with the GPC Basic reporting level. The GPC Basic reporting level requires all activities required by the U.S. Community Protocol, except the use of energy in potable water and wastewater treatment and distribution.*
- 2030 absolute emissions reduction target considers population growth. Communities may use/accept both per-capita and absolute emissions targets.



- *Justification: Population growth can have a significant impact on future emissions. Absolute emissions targets offer a more definitive reduction regardless of population impacts and or external impacts (e.g. tourism).*

Race to Zero

Race To Zero is a global campaign established by United Nations Climate and UK COP26 Climate Champions during Fall 2020 in order to rally ambitious leadership from all sectors of society — businesses, cities, regions, investors — in order to secure a future of warming that exceeds no more than 1.5 °C.

The science shows us that governments are crucial partners in solving the climate emergency but that they must strengthen their contributions to the Paris Agreement in order to unlock a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth. Although the Race to Zero was born out of the galvanizing sense of urgency leading into COP26, the imperative for communities to reach climate neutrality will continue for decades to come. ICLEI USA invites all our members to do this work with us, join [the ICLEI150 in the Race to Zero](#), and access our dedicated technical support program to reach your 2030 and 2050 climate goals.

Need more support?

[Contact us!](#)