

# FAQ:

## Resilient Communities for America Campaign

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**RESILIENT  
COMMUNITIES  
FOR AMERICA**

### What is the Resilient Communities for America campaign?

The Resilient Communities for America Agreement is a national campaign that will mobilize hundreds of U.S. local elected officials—mayors, county executives, city council members, etc.—who pledge to create more resilient cities, towns, and counties, built to overcome our nation's extreme weather, energy, and economic challenges. The campaign will not only inspire greater local leadership on resilience, but also will provide local governments that join the campaign with resources to help them achieve their goals.

The centerpiece of the campaign is the Resilient Communities for America Agreement, a letter that local elected officials will sign to formalize their commitment and showcase their leadership.

### Why is community resilience of urgent national importance?

Improving resilience—our ability to bounce back—is a critical issue for America, and mayors and county officials must take the lead. Communities around the country are on the front lines of four closely related challenges:

1. **Extreme weather:** Record-breaking and destructive extreme weather fueled by a changing climate cost us \$188 billion in 2011-2012.
2. **Energy security:** A power grid taxed by hotter temperatures, energy sources whose carbon emissions exacerbate climate change, and reliance on foreign energy and its price swings all weaken our resilience.
3. **Faltering infrastructure:** Aging and unreliable infrastructure (water, energy, transportation, etc.) is further stressed by extreme weather and energy challenges.
4. **Economic uncertainty:** Ongoing economic uncertainty has left millions out of work and communities starved for investment; disasters and extreme weather further hamper our recovery.



Our safety, security, and economic prosperity are in jeopardy if we do not prepare for these challenges.

Local governments have long been the leaders on climate action and sustainability, and they have the ability to take effective, wide-ranging local actions to prepare for climate change impacts, improve local energy independence, renew America's infrastructure, and strengthen their economies in the process.

## Why is a leadership campaign like this necessary?

- **Because action on resilience begins with a leadership commitment.**  
The campaign will act as a strong starting point for local governments beginning resilience work, and serve as a re-affirmation of leadership for more advanced cities and counties. For all local governments, making a leadership commitment through the campaign can help them secure funding and attract investment to resilience-related projects.
- **Because we need greater national awareness.**  
As our extreme weather, infrastructure, and energy challenges grow, there is a pressing need to raise awareness among local governments about the nature of these threats (and their link to climate change)—and that local governments can lead on effective solutions. The campaign will create this awareness, among both local governments and the public.
- **Because local governments need stronger federal and state support.**  
Local governments must more effectively advocate for federal and state support of local resilience and preparedness initiatives, and infrastructure renewal projects. Through a multi-year campaign, there will be opportunities for hundreds of local governments to come together and speak with one voice to draw national attention.
- **Because local governments deserve more recognition.**  
Local governments deserve more recognition for their work and leadership on resilience-related topics: climate mitigation and adaptation, renewable energy, disaster preparedness. Existing leaders can inspire new local governments to take action, and the campaign will foster greater recognition and media attention.
- **Because local governments need more resources and support.**  
There is a need to accelerate learning, sharing, and progress among local governments on cutting-edge resilience topics. The campaign will provide free resources to local governments, and facilitate opportunities for knowledge sharing and training.

## What organizations are coordinating the campaign?

Four major organizations each share the goal of driving this broad leadership movement on community resilience: ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, the National League of Cities, the U.S. Green Building Council and the World Wildlife Fund. After hearing from their memberships that local resilience was a key priority, they have joined together to create and drive Resilient Communities for America. The campaign is intended to be an inclusive initiative under which additional non-profit organizations, public agencies, and private companies can become partners and offer their own resources and expertise to advance community resilience.

A campaign Advisory Committee of local government staff and experts from the academic community and private sector will provide input and direction on the campaign to ensure that it meets the needs of cities and counties and reflects the most contemporary thinking and practice in the field.



## What are the campaign's goals?

- Secure a leadership commitment to address community resilience from 500 local elected official signatories in the first 12 months after the campaign launches in June 2013, and more than 1,000 by 2015.
- Secure greater state and federal funding, support, and collaboration with local governments to support local initiatives on resilience and preparedness, infrastructure renewal, and energy security.
- Measurably improve the resilience of all communities that participate in the campaign.

## What commitments does the campaign seek?

The Agreement letter specifies two separate commitments:

**1. Local elected officials commit their city or county to taking action to improve resilience.** But since the resilience needs of communities vary greatly from place to place, there are no one-size-fits-all goals or targets for the campaign. This means that each local government decides for itself what its goals and initiatives should be, based on local circumstances. For some cities and counties, the campaign's commitment is a way to showcase existing goals and plans around climate action, renewable energy, or infrastructure, while for others it is an opportunity to redouble efforts and become more ambitious.

**2. Local governments agree to share their progress, solutions, and success stories with other local governments.** The campaign is intended to help cities and counties learn from one another to scale the best solutions and innovations quickly. To accomplish this, local government staff will be asked to share their stories annually through the Resilient Communities for America Online Platform.

Additionally, the Agreement calls on state and federal leaders to support local resilience initiatives and take their own actions to improve resilience.

## What benefits does the campaign provide to local governments?

### 1. Leadership recognition.

The campaign is a prominent platform for elected officials to showcase their leadership on the national stage. Mayors and county officials from across the country who sign the Agreement letter will be identified by the media, the public, and environmental stakeholders as the leaders and innovators on the emerging national issue of resilience.

Through the campaign, ICLEI and its coalition of partner organizations will offer ample opportunities for cities and counties to receive recognition and media attention for their resilience-related accomplishments and news announcements.

### 2. Free technical resources.

As the campaign gets underway, signatory local governments will be able to access free resources designed to help them achieve their resilience goals. First among these will be an online community where local officials can find and collaborate with their peers with similar goals and needs, access technical assistance, and find resources.

Tools and resources will be provided to signatory communities by ICLEI and all of the non-profit partners that join the campaign. These will include guidebooks and case studies, exclusive webinar trainings, software tools, and an online "answers network" to ask questions and receive technical support. Over time, the power of a highly visible movement of local leaders is likely to lead to additional opportunities, and as this multiyear campaign evolves, so will the offerings to local government signatories.



## Who can sign the Agreement?

Any U.S. local elected official can sign. Officials with executive authority, such as mayors or county executives, can sign to formally commit their local government to taking action and sharing progress. Other officials, such as city council members or county board supervisors, can sign the Agreement to express their individual commitment for the campaign objectives. Any local government that has an elected official Signatory will be entitled to access campaign resources.

While only active local elected officials can become Signatories, other individuals (current and former governors and Congressional representatives, former local elected officials, federal agency leaders, etc.) and organizations can support the objectives of the Agreement by becoming Endorsers.

## What actions can a local government take to create a more resilient community?

The Agreement letter includes a “paths to resilience” section that suggests some of the most effective and important actions to improve community resilience. The main categories of actions include “climate preparedness,” “energy security,” “infrastructure renewal,” and “economic prosperity.” Some of the most cost-effective initiatives have multiple benefits: by expanding renewable energy, for example, a city can increase its energy independence, create local jobs, reduce carbon emissions, and lessen the vulnerability of the electric grid during heat waves.

## There are a number of emerging resilience initiatives for cities and local governments. How is this one different?

Resilient Communities for America is the only U.S. resilience initiative that seeks to build a broad new movement encompassing hundreds of local governments and their elected officials, from small towns and rural counties to large cities. While some resilience programs or campaigns focus only on large or leading cities, the campaign will cultivate leadership, commitment, and action from the widest range of local governments, in terms of size, geography, and progress. The campaign is a strong complement (not a replacement or alternative) to other resilience initiatives and programs, including contests and challenges. It seeks to facilitate the delivery of existing tools and resources to local governments through wide-ranging partnerships.

## What is the Resilient Communities for America Online Platform?

The online platform is the place where campaign participants will access free resources and share their progress and success stories. Participants will log in to the online community from the campaign website. Once inside, they will access a variety of social networking features and technical content, such as on-demand trainings, a resource library, and an “Answers Network,” where they can ask technical questions and receive answers from other local governments, ICLEI staff, and other thought leaders. The online platform will also feature public city and county profile pages that showcase a local government’s climate and energy goals, progress, and accomplishments.

The online platform is currently in initial development, and modules of the platform will roll out in phases beginning in fall 2013.

