



Lander Climate Action Network

DRAFT recommendations to the Lander City Council and Mayor's Office to reduce Lander's emissions and increase environmental resiliency.

December 9, 2020

Introduction

In pursuit of the goals outlined in the Mayor's recent climate proclamation, LCAN (Lander Climate Action Network) is making a series of recommendations to the city council that aim to create an enduring structure the city can work from and build off of to reduce Lander's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increase its environmental resiliency in an ongoing manner. We are acutely aware of the city's budget constraints, and our effort strives, in particular, to increase dollar efficiencies and boost our community's economic viability. LCAN is energized by the ever-growing list of possibilities for Lander to achieve this vision for a sustainable community. Importantly, we see great potential for this long-term project to increase civic participation amongst a large pool of Lander citizens, including a younger generation that has so much at stake in the future of a changing climate.

Summary of Recommendations

LCAN recommends that the City of Lander take the following steps to reduce Lander GHG emissions and increase its environmental resiliency in an ongoing manner:

1. Create a volunteer advisory board responsible for advancing Lander's commitment to reduce emissions and increase environmental resiliency.

1.1 The city should encourage the creation of an independent volunteer advisory board responsible for overseeing its intent to reduce greenhouse emissions and enhance community resilience. The advisory board should meet all of the requirements of other independent volunteer boards recognized by the city and encompass a diversity of community members capable of collaborating and bringing expertise to solve local energy efficiency, sustainability, and climate change related challenges.

1.2 The city should designate at least one official or council member who is willing to help support and guide these efforts as a liaison to the advisory board.

2. Develop and operationalize a greenhouse gas inventory for the City of Lander.

2.1 The City of Lander, per guidance of the advisory board, should become a member of ICLEI for \$600/year and determine a timeline for GHG inventory

completion to measure a baseline for Lander's emissions and to inform the city's ongoing strategic planning efforts.

2.2 The city should authorize the advisory board to begin working with city staff to start preparing and implementing GHG inventory for the City of Lander.

2.3 The city should announce an emissions reductions goal based on the results of the inventory. This goal should be attainable and in line with the scientific understanding of climate change and consider the cost effectiveness of any emission reduction strategy.

3. Identify and invest in projects with a high return on investment that reduce greenhouse emissions and lower the city's operational costs.

3.1 The advisory board should examine the existing projects planned by the city that would impact emission reductions or improve energy efficiency and leverage community support and interest to see these to completion.

3.2 The city should authorize the advisory board to work with officials necessary to begin identifying and prioritizing additional "low-hanging fruit" projects with high returns on investment and emissions reductions savings.

3.3 Following the completion of the GHG inventory the City of Lander should undergo a strategic planning effort to align future project prioritization with greenhouse gas emission goals.

4. Work with community partners and organizations to identify and pursue funding opportunities.

4.1 The City of Lander should continue applying for Wyoming's State Energy Program to increase the efficiency of city facilities.

4.2 The City of Lander should share records of energy savings with the community, LCAN, and other interested parties so that they can help educate the community on these initiatives and grow local support for energy and cost savings.

4.3 The City of Lander should consider applying for USDA's Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grant to fund a baseline emissions inventory and/or an energy audit.

4.4 The City of Lander should establish regular contact with LCAN and other non-profits in the Lander Community to discuss the financial needs and requirements of future projects or memberships (such as the ICLEI membership fee).

Recommendations Context

1. Create a volunteer advisory board responsible for advancing Lander's commitment to reduce emissions and increase environmental resiliency.

Most cities that have taken steps to lower emissions have started by creating an advisory board or standing committee responsible for working with City officials and overseeing the effort. One efficient way to start this would be to have an independent group (like LCAN) develop a board with a city official or Council member serving as a liaison between the board and the city. We see a volunteer board as one of the first and most fundamental steps in legitimizing the city's efforts and guiding future efforts and projects and think it is important that this board be made up of a diversity of community members capable of collaborating and bringing their expertise to solve local energy efficiency, sustainability, and environmental resiliency related challenges.

Recommendations:

1.1 The city should encourage the creation of an independent volunteer advisory board responsible for overseeing its intent to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance community resilience. The advisory board should meet all of the requirements of other independent volunteer boards recognized by the city and encompass a diversity of community members capable of collaborating and bringing expertise and insights to solve local energy efficiency, sustainability, and climate change related challenges.

1.2 The city should designate at least one official or council member who is willing to help support and guide these efforts as a liaison to the advisory board.

2. Develop and operationalize a greenhouse gas inventory for the City of Lander.

To set meaningful emissions reduction goals, the city must first understand and measure its emissions. A greenhouse gas inventory collects the necessary information and reports upon all the greenhouse gas emitting sources both directly owned or indirectly influenced by the City. Sections of a typical GHG inventory categorize emissions related to:

1. City-owned facilities and transportation
2. Purchased energy for city use
3. Indirect influences such as employee travel, waste generated in operations, etc.

Data collected in these categories would be used to inform targets, goals, and actionable steps in the future. Most comparable cities to Lander that have developed a GHG inventory have gotten assistance by becoming a member of ICLEI, an organization committed to sustainable urban development for local and regional governments. ICLEI is the largest and most renowned network of its kind providing technical guidance and peer-to-peer support. Many comparable cities to Lander including Laramie, Red Lodge, MT, and Hailey, ID use ICLEI's GHG calculator and

resources to track year-to-year improvements in emissions. An ICLEI membership costs \$600/year for communities with a population of less than 50,000.

Recommendations:

2.1 The City of Lander, per guidance of the advisory board, should become a member of ICLEI and determine a timeline for GHG inventory completion to measure a baseline for Lander's emission and inform the city's ongoing strategic planning efforts.

2.2 The city should authorize the advisory board to begin working with city staff to start preparing and implementing a GHG inventory for the City of Lander.

2.3 The City of Lander should announce an emissions reductions goal based on the information presented in the inventory. This goal should be attainable and in line with the scientific understanding of climate change and consider the cost effectiveness of any emission reduction strategy.

3. Identify and invest in projects with a high return on financial investment that reduce greenhouse emissions and lower the city's operational costs.

Our recommendation is for the city to focus as soon as possible on completing "low-hanging fruit" projects that have already been identified or that could be accomplished easily with community assistance and volunteer resources. It is not necessary to wait for the GHG inventory to be finalized to start this process—although the inventory will certainly help understand the city's needs and prioritize future projects. Project ideas presented below could be good candidates for greenhouse gas reductions and later monetary assessment based upon the efforts of similar communities to Lander.

Potential Projects:

- Blue Sky funded rooftop solar projects. Possible locations for further study could include: Lander City Hall, the Golf Course Clubhouse, the Lander Pool, All FCSD#1 buildings, the Lander Library, the Pioneer Museum, the Garfield Street Firehouse, the US Post Office, the BLM building, the Forest Service building, the Game and Fish facilities, the Chamber of Commerce, the Lander Community Center, the clinic and hospital, and both the water treatment facility and wastewater treatment facility.
- Conversion of fleet vehicles to electric drive following planned retirements.
- Installation of an electric vehicle charging station (potentially near the Chamber of Commerce building).
- Converting the sewer ponds system to an anaerobic digester system.
- Replacing street lights with LED lights.
- Conduct energy audits for public and municipal buildings. Use these audits to prioritize future projects and investments.
- Create a sustainable design for landfill closure.

- Water saving projects throughout town.
- Assess the municipal consumables such as fertilizer or paper and consider a low greenhouse gas option.
- Public outreach to encourage non-motorized transportation.
- Public outreach and incentives to get the greater community and private entities to undergo similar projects as the ones listed above.

Recommendations

3.1 The advisory board should examine the existing projects planned by the city that would impact emission reductions or improve energy efficiency and leverage community support and interest to see these to completion.

3.2 The city should authorize the advisory board to work with officials necessary to begin identifying and prioritizing additional “low-hanging fruit” projects with high returns on investment and emissions reductions savings.

3.3 Following the completion of the GHG inventory the City of Lander should undergo a strategic planning effort to align future project prioritization with greenhouse gas emission goals.

4. Work with community partners and organizations to identify and pursue funding opportunities.

While many of the recommendations above require some amount of local funding, there are numerous grant and assistance opportunities for local governments interested in evaluating their emissions, improving energy efficiency, and lowering their overall impact on the climate. We think that the advisory board, along with assistance from community and non-profit organizations like LCAN can take on much of the work of researching and writing necessary to apply for funding opportunities.

Examples of federal, state, and local funding opportunities include:

- **USDA Renewable Energy Development Assistance (REDA) Grants.** Local entities can apply for grants for energy audits, renewable energy technical assistance and renewable energy site assessments. Funds include payment of worker salaries directly related to the project, travel expenses related to conducting energy audits, or renewable energy development assistance, office supplies and administrative expenses. The maximum amount of an energy audit and REDA grant in any given fiscal year is \$100,000. https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508_RD_FS_RBS_REAP_EA.pdf
- **Wyoming Energy Authority’s State Energy Program (SEP).** The City of Lander has already used SEP grants to fund projects. Grant programs through SEP for the 2020–2021

year include K–12 Schools Lighting Only, Local Government Energy Improvement, and Small Business Energy Audit/Retrofit. <https://www.wyoenergy.org/financing/>

- **Americorp Funding.** Cities such as Lander or local non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations are able to apply for funding to host an Americorps intern. Towns in Montana like Whitefish and Red Lodge have used Americorps Energy Corps interns to help address community needs around energy efficiency and planning. <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>
- **Rocky Mountain Power Blue Sky Funding.** The Blue Sky Program funds projects for buildings that serve the community and have good rooftop solar potential. This funding through Rocky Mountain Power can cover up to 100% of project costs for local government and non-profit entities. <https://www.rockymountainpower.net/community/blue-sky-projects/funding-applications.html>
- **Public-Nonprofit Partnership with LCAN.** The City of Lander has been a nonprofit sponsor of several groups that fundraise for city infrastructure projects. Examples include LAPs which over several years raised thousands of dollars for Lander Area Pathways. Another group interested in the rodeo helped raise funds for new rodeo grounds bleachers at the city owned rodeo grounds. LCAN can partner with the city to raise funds locally on well defined projects.

Recommendations:

4.1 The City of Lander should continue applying for Wyoming’s State Energy Program to increase the efficiency of city facilities.

4.2 The city to share records of energy savings with the community, LCAN, and other interested parties so that they can help educate the community on these initiatives and grow local support for energy saving and costs savings.

4.3 The City of Lander should consider applying for USDA’s Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grant to fund a baseline emissions inventory and/or energy audit.

4.4 The City of Lander should establish regular contact with LCAN and other non-profits in the Lander Community to discuss the financial needs and requirements of future projects or memberships (such as the ICLEI membership fee).