

# Collaborate with a Political Champion and Engage Council

Council support is critical for implementation, as it provides direction, inspiration and impetus for local government staff, and the community, to prioritize community energy planning. Communities that take the time to engage with a political champion and council on an ongoing basis may be better positioned to move forward on implementation. Early engagement can help to surface key questions, considerations and possible challenges and can guide the CEP implementation team to focus on the aspects of the plan that matter most to the community.

## GTI Advice

- Consider the following GTI Advice on how to engage with political champions and elected officials, when to engage them, why to engage them and how to engage them.

## Collaborating with Political Champions

### Who to engage

- While some communities may have an existing political champion for community energy, many must work to engage and foster a champion
- Engage an elected official that actively supports community energy initiatives (consider a councillor that supports alternative modes of transportation, energy efficiency, distributed energy projects, waste management, etc.)
- If none of your councillors actively support community energy initiatives consider engaging a councillor supportive of improved community health, social, resilience or economic development
- Consider engaging multiple political champions as a way to strengthen overall support for the CEP and in an effort to mitigate the risks associated with political turnover

### When to engage them

- Engage a political champion as early as possible
- The champion should remain engaged throughout the CEP development and implementation process

### Why engage them

- A political champion can establish legitimacy, generate widespread buy-in and secure resources for the community energy planning process.
- They can act as a liaison between the CEP development and implementation teams and council
- They may be available to provide insights to ensure the CEP is developed with the public interest in mind

### How to engage them and what to focus on

- If you do not have a personal connection with elected officials in your community consider reaching out to the office of the identified elected official by phone and have an informal discussion
- Present a clear and inspiring message that can easily be championed
- Send the elected official a letter describing the rationale for the CEP and the potential value it will add to the community and summarize how you would like the champion to be engaged in the CEP process
- The mandate of the political champion should include promoting the CEP, meeting with other elected officials to discuss the potential value, risks and benefits of the CEP and participating in key CEP meetings

## Building Widespread Support from Elected Officials

### Who to engage

- Council
- Committees of Council with a mandate related to community energy
- Agencies, boards and commissions tasked with providing input to council on special topics
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). CAOs are responsible for the administrative management and operations of local governments and for ensuring that resolutions and by-laws of council are implemented efficiently and effectively

### When to engage them

- Engage council once before beginning the CEP
- At least once per quarter during CEP development
- On a frequent basis during CEP implementation
- Annually
- Consider election and budget cycles and CAO turnover

### Why engage them

- Council support is critical for implementation. Their continued interest in the CEP can help garner support from other community stakeholders and can ensure that the CEP remains a priority in local government staff work plans
- Council can allocate funding for implementation for staff time, project capital or maintenance costs and for programs
- CAO support is a significant success factor for CEP implementation. While the CAO may not be directly involved in the implementation of actions, their support is critical for signaling the importance of the CEP to council and other local government departments

### How to engage them and what to focus on

- Brief introductory presentations to council and/or committees of council *before* the CEP is started (consider having the champion present to council)
- Focus on the value proposition of the CEP. Describe how the implementation of the plan will enable the local government to meet goals established in council's Strategic Plan
- Meetings (up to a half-day) to present risks assessments, proposed investments, and the value proposition *before* the plan is presented for adoption. If possible, use visual tools such as energy maps<sup>29</sup> to illustrate your points. Present the CEP as a good investment. Emphasize the risks associated with *not* implementing the plan. Back your claims up by detailed, precise and defensible data
- Describe the costs of the plan and who bears the costs as well as what the proposed savings are, and to whom the savings accrue
- In the early stages of CEP development invite other groups or agencies to present to council or committees of council as well. Consider inviting health agencies, school boards, homebuilders associations etc. that can speak to the value of community energy planning
- Brief introductory presentations to agencies/boards/commissions that have a mandate related to community energy (including health, social, resilience, etc.)
- Once the CEP is adopted, present regular (e.g. quarterly) staff reports to council or committees of council. Reports can be mostly qualitative however measurable updates can be included if the data is available
- After the CEP is adopted provide an annual report to council describing measurable benefits of implementation (e.g. progress on GHG reductions and Key Performance Indicators)
- Consider additional presentations to council as needed to report on CEP development and implementation milestones

### Relevant Case Studies (See Appendix III)

- Case Study 2: Measuring the Widespread Economic Benefits in the City of London, Ontario
- Case Study 3: Measuring Green Jobs in Durham Region, Ontario
- Case Study 4: Measuring the Impacts of Sustainable Communities on Local Retail Sales New York City, New York
- Case Study 5: Framing the Value Proposition, Edmonton, Alberta
- Case Study 21: Integrated Financial Planning in the City of Coquitlam, British Columbia

### Relevant Resources

- National Report on Community Energy Plan Implementation ([www.gettingtoimplementation.ca/research](http://www.gettingtoimplementation.ca/research))
- Community Energy Planning: The Value Proposition ([www.gettingtoimplementation.ca/research](http://www.gettingtoimplementation.ca/research))

<sup>29</sup> An energy map illustrates spatial information about energy in a community. It can visually identify opportunities for reducing energy use (e.g. targeting energy efficiency programs), opportunities for shifting modes of transportation (e.g. transit projects), potential sources of energy (e.g. biomass), and opportunities for distributed energy resources (e.g. district energy systems). The various types of energy maps are described in greater detail in: Canadian Urban Institute (2011). Integrated Energy Mapping for Ontario Communities. <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/546bbd2ae4b077803c592197/t/54b807a6e4b060f2e9745d1e/1421346726645/CUIPublication.IntegratedEnergyMappingOntario.pdf>