



STEP 3: DEVELOP AN ENERGY VISION

WHAT: An effective energy vision statement offers a representation of what the community wants to look like 10-20 years into the future.

WHY: This “future best self” provides a focus for the rest of the work that will go into the CESP. A clearly articulated, transparent, and shared vision of the community’s energy future sets the direction for subsequent decisions about goals, strategies, and actions.

WHO: This step will be initiated and guided by the Leadership Team, with input from key stakeholders.

HOW: During this phase of the planning process, the Leadership Team will need to:

- Identify Guiding Principles and Priorities to Use as a Basis for the Vision
- Create a Focused Vision Statement
- Share the Final Vision with the Broader Community



WHEN: The development of a new energy vision statement will take between 4-6 weeks and should start after the Leadership Team is in place, because they will be driving this step. As stakeholder input and buy-in will also be important, key stakeholders should be identified and engaged, though the full engagement plan need not be finalized. Some communities will already have a broader vision mandated for them, or find that a vision of energy use fits within the scope of an existing community vision statement. Re-articulating a broader, established

CESP Timeline										
Step 1	Form Leadership Team									
Step 2	Identify Stakeholders	Engage Stakeholders								
Step 3	Vision									
Step 4	Energy Profile									
Step 5					Goals and Strategies					
Step 6						Identify Actions				
Step 7							Identify Financing			
Step 8								Implementation Blueprint		
Step 9								Monitoring Plan		
Step 10	Scope and Develop Final CESP								Adopt & Publicize	
Month:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

community goal is acceptable and may be advantageous in some circumstances, as it reduces the time taken for this step. However, do consider the value of developing a vision with a specific emphasis on what the energy future will look like, to use as the motivation and focus for subsequent energy planning work.

Identify Guiding Principles and Priorities to Use as a Basis for the Vision

The Leadership Team will start the process of creating a vision statement by identifying the jurisdiction or community's existing **guiding principles**. These are the overarching objectives that inform all of an entity's activities (not just energy-related ones), and reviewing and prioritizing them will lay the foundation for the energy vision.

For **local government** operations, guiding principles often include:

- Support economic development and job creation
- Save taxpayers money
- Reduce infrastructure redevelopment and maintenance costs
- Demonstrate leadership – “Lead by Example”
- Minimize environmental impacts
- Improve energy security
- Diversify energy supply
- Use local resources

Along with the list above, **the broader community** may be aspiring to:

- Strengthen economic development and job creation
- Assure affordable, reliable, and secure energy services
- Support community engagement
- Improve the quality of life for all residents

Since the most-effective and useful vision statements reflect the guiding principles for all constituencies involved, the Leadership Team should meet with the appropriate stakeholders to help shape its list. When gathering input, observe which objectives are common among many or all stakeholders. These indicate the high-priority principles that will inform the visioning process.

Create a Focused Vision Statement

Next, the Leadership Team will integrate input from the stakeholders, including the high-priority principles, to create a focused energy vision statement. The energy vision outlines what the jurisdiction or community will look like when the CESP is implemented successfully. At a minimum it should:

- **Define the scope**, keeping in mind that the scope of the vision should be aligned with the scope of the plan that will be developed (e.g., *government operations* or *the whole community*).
- **Represent high-priority principles** (e.g., *economic development, energy security, environmental impact*).
- **Be general enough in nature to allow for changes in context during the implementation of the plan** (e.g., *build a green collar workforce* or *minimize environmental impacts*).
- **Focus on outcomes, not on how to get there** (e.g., *assure reliable, affordable, and clean energy* rather than *build a 20-MW solar project*).
- **Represent something attainable but also a stretch to achieve.**

To be most effective, the vision statement should also be:

- **Vivid** – Paint a picture of the desired future.
- **Inspirational and meaningful** – Connect people to the effort.
- **Unique to the local situation** – Speak to the local jurisdiction or community’s culture and values.
- **Simply stated and easy to understand** – Communicate clearly to the target groups.

Preparing such a high-level statement can seem daunting. Consider these ways of focusing the work of your visioning groups:

- Review the high-priority principles already identified.
- Ask the group – “Why are you here today? What motivates you?”
- Start with three words – Find a powerful three-word vision and then only add words you absolutely need to complete it.
- Ask each participant what one outcome they would most like to see. Put all of those outcomes on a wall and try to generate a vision statement that incorporates them all.
- Think about what is impossible, and then back off just a bit to end up with an ambitious but achievable vision.
- Focus on the “critical verb” and use it in the future tense – for example, what will your jurisdiction or community:
 - Be
 - Build
 - Produce
 - Generate
 - Create
 - Lead
 - Avoid
 - Reduce
 - Eliminate
- Study the vision statements adopted by others. Below are a few examples of **community-wide CESP** visions. Notice that they show a range from very broad and general statements to more-specifically energy related.
- Vision statements for a **local government CESP** can also be aspirational – for example: “Lee County is a leader in the provision of energy efficient, responsible, and cost effective operations”– *Lee County, FL.*

BROAD	We want Austin to be the most livable community in the country – <i>Austin, TX</i>
	Reduce climate change impact, and become the renewable energy capital of Canada – <i>Toronto, ON</i>
	Albany is a model of community health and sustainability in its planning, restorative development, and conservation of energy, water, and natural resources – <i>Albany, NY</i>
	Assuring reliable, affordable, and clean electricity is essential to the continued attraction and retention of [New York] businesses and residents – <i>New York, NY</i>
SPECIFIC	Montpelier and its neighboring communities will be leaders in creating an economically sustainable and environmentally responsible community reducing fossil fuel consumption by at least 80% by 2030 – <i>Montpelier, VT</i>



Troubleshooting a stalled vision discussion:

- Avoid editing minutia.
- Engage key Leadership Team members to drive the discussion to conclusion.
- Use visual planning when possible so people can see the ideas being presented.
- It is impossible to make everyone 100% happy – remind the group there is no perfect vision.

After the Leadership Team has drafted the vision statement, it will be circulated among key stakeholder representatives for feedback. The Leadership Team will then make any necessary revisions and finalize the vision statement, with sign off from the Champion.

Share the Final Vision with the Broader Community

Once finalized, the Leadership Team can roll out the vision statement to the broader community in a highly visible way, to create momentum for the rest of the planning project. Highlighting the statement in communications can foster awareness of the vision, codify it, and build buy-in towards its achievement across government departments and/or sectors of the community. Keep the vision front and center in all aspects of work and life by:

- Making the vision statement a primary component of all communications and processes related to the rest of the CESP development;
- Including the vision as a tagline along letterhead, mailing envelopes, websites, municipal utility bills, and any other materials used to routinely communicate to the CESP's constituencies (i.e., government staff or the broader community);
- Asking staff to add the vision statement to their email signatures; and
- Incorporating the vision statement into recruitment materials and job performance criteria – make this a vision that inspires day-to-day thinking and activities.



Even if the CESP is focused primarily on planning for local government operations, sharing this vision with the public, along with information on the CESP as it develops, will provide taxpayers a picture of how their dollars are being spent and build support for the process.

Tools

[Tool 3.1: CESP Vision Development Worksheet \(.docx\)](#)