

# **Research Proposal:**

## **Finding the most effective U.S State Climate Action Plan: A Progress Review**

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### **Abstract:**

Over recent years there has been an increasing call for climate action in the United States of America. This has resulted in the publication of climate action plans varying from local to state to federal government. The number of plans has cluttered the online atmosphere making it difficult to perform any kind of comparative analysis on the implementation of these plans. My research will consist of putting together all the prevalent goals and information described in the climate action plans that are only published on the state level. Currently there are 22 state level climate action plans published; therefore, reading through those executive summaries will get me all the information needed to put together a solid database. The database will provide the space necessary to perform a general analysis of each state's progress which will assist in deciding which two states have shown the most potential with their implementation. Those two states will be researched extensively as case studies in order to effectively figure out what is leading them to be successful, and to discover how to replicate that success for other states.

**Introduction:**

During my review of climate action in the United States, I found a plethora of different climate action plans produced by a different source each time. I found climate action plans on the federal level, state level, county level, and even for different sectors such as transportation, water, and energy. The large number of plans for the US hinders the ability to track their progress. The foggy transparency makes it harder to see if states are following through on their promises. Honing down my research scale to the state government level, I found 33 US states with Climate Action Plans. Twenty-two of them are published, nine are being updated, and one is in development. I want to find which state has had the most progress reaching their climate action plan goals, and why? By reviewing the efficacy of policies mentioned in the climate action plan and comparing live carbon emission data with their Green House Gas emission goals, I hope to answer this question.

By determining which states have the most progress with their climate action plans, I hope to also gain a better understanding which policies in specific are the most effective. I will examine the barriers that stand in the way of replication across states who do not have as much progress, as well as identify which policies do not seem to provide a significant change. This can be used to better allocate government resources, as well as determining which policies deserve more attention. Another main purpose of this study is to continue holding these state governments accountable, and to keep climate action plans at the front of their radars.

**Background/Related Work and Motivation:**

There have been two different maps curated that sparked my interest in the amount of climate action taken by U.S State governments. The first map, “U.S State Climate Action Plans” by the Center for Climate Energy Solutions displays all 33 states and the status of their climate action plans (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions). It acts as a reference to see where states are in terms of creating a climate action plan. The map also showed the year in which these state’s plans were published, and many of them had been active for years. I failed to find any research detailing the progress or impact these older plans have made towards their outlined goals.

Another map titled “State Climate Action Map” produced by UC Berkeley’s California-China Climate institute contained a more detailed account on the goals and policies each state has in effect. The map had a thorough presentation of each state’s greenhouse emission goals and ways in which they were attaining those goals. Clicking each state on the map provided an accurate graph tracking the live carbon emission data for the state as well as what sector was producing said emissions (California-China Climate Institute). The main problem with this extensive database was that it pulled information from multiple levels of plans as opposed to sticking to a certain sector. This disqualifies it from any kind of efficacy analysis. These sources prompted me to create my own database that was exclusive to state level plans in order to find out which state government has done the most for their climate action plan through an in-depth case study.

Some reference guides for understanding what makes a good climate action plan consist of the books *Local Climate Action Planning*, and *Climate Action Planning: A Guide to Creating Low-Carbon, Resilient Communities*. The first book describes in great detail how to create and implement a successful climate action plan at the local government level. It provides a guide for

local officials to follow when creating climate action plans by explaining the most efficient ways to create the most progress. It also discusses possible solutions to certain barriers such as public participation and implementation problems (Boswell et al.). The second book also describes how to use climate action plans to transform communities into more sustainable places. It reviews real world projects on their efficacy and provides analysis on continuing challenges (Boswell et al.). Both these books provide the baseline knowledge state officials have before creating these plans. They also show key components for successful implementation which aids in figuring out which States have enacted those parts of their plans.

## **Methods**

### **Phase One:**

The purpose of Phase One for this project is to compile all the goals and methods set out in each climate action plan into a single database for an initial comparison. In order to do so, I plan on downloading all thirty-three climate action plans onto a computer and start with an initial reading of each climate plan's executive summary. The executive summary is a basic overview of the climate action plan which contains the main points that their plan covers. Reading this would allow me to highlight the key information I am interested in gathering from each climate action plan, to then sift through the document to where the goals and methods are located. After gathering all my information and data, I can create an interactive map that compiles all the needed information in one space in order to complete a general comparison of each state's progress. I aim to model my database after the "State Climate Action Map" mentioned earlier. Following a similar format as that site, I aim to complete a more thorough and clearer database for the state climate action plans.

## Phase Two:

The goal for Phase Two is to use the information gathered in Phase One to perform an efficacy review on the climate action plans. The database will assist in providing a clearer picture of each state climate action plan's general progress with quantifiable data such as greenhouse gas emissions, etc. The next step in this phase is to choose two state climate action plans to perform a more extensive review of all their outlined policies and procedures in two separate case studies. The decision of which states will be determined by the general analysis from phase one. Both case studies will be of the top two particularly strongest states in relation to their climate action plans. The case studies will be all encompassing and include different factors that are specific to each state in order to complete an accurate comparison.

## **Expected Results**

There are technically two expected results, one for each phase of the research project. For phase one the expected result will be a literature review and an interactive map. The literature review will be of the 22 executive summaries and will be used to build the interactive map. These tools will hopefully help organize at least a fraction of government plans which would make it more accessible for the public to keep track of their state's progress. The established pressure the database creates is also meant to hold the government accountable on their promises. Upon the completion of phase one, the expected results for phase two will be the two separate case studies of the top two states. These case studies will reveal the reasons behind a successful action plan such as which economic policies are most effective, and which policies people respond to well. The case studies should also uncover how effective government spending is and provide a guide for other states to consider with their climate action plans.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is vital in understanding the many different elements that come together to produce these climate action plans. By studying the literature and producing a database, I am creating a way to track the progress of each state's climate action plan, while also providing an opportunity to compare what makes one plan more successful than the other. The research will also provide insight on which economic and practical policies are the most effective in producing results. I am hopeful this research will bring clearer insight to state government planning as well as clearer insight to implementation.

## References

Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. "U.S. State Climate Action Plans." Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.c2es.org/document/climate-action-plans/>.

California-China Climate Institute. "States Climate Action Map." Accessed October 15, 2022. <https://ccci.berkeley.edu/states-climate-action-map>.

Boswell, Michael R., Adrienne I. Greve, and Tammy L. Seale. *Climate Action Planning: A Guide to Creating Low-Carbon, Resilient Communities*. Washington, DC: Island Press/Center for Resource Economics, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.5822/978-1-61091-964-7>.

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## Budget

- Dell XPS Laptop – \$2300

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