

# PARTNERS FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION

## Milestone 2: How to set emissions reduction targets

Setting emissions reduction targets is essential to spur action on climate change and track your municipality's progress. For PCP recognition of Milestone 2, your targets must meet the following requirements:

1. The target must clearly state whether it is for community emissions or corporate emissions (those under direct municipal control).
2. The target must be an overall GHG reduction in the form:

**% reduction from baseline year by target year**

3. The target must be adopted by council resolution.

### Understand your local context

When setting your targets, it is important to understand the key influences on energy consumption and emissions, and your ability to reduce them:

**Energy and emissions profile** — A GHG inventory (Milestone 1) provides information about overall emissions, what departments or sectors produce them, and the intensity of emissions from different sources.

**Community form, geography and climate** — These factors can affect the potential value of transit, cycling, building retrofits, and district and renewable energy initiatives.

**Demographic trends** — Population growth, and factors such as age and family size may cause increased emissions or create opportunities to reduce them.

**Technology changes** — Adoption of new technologies, such as solar panels and electric vehicles, may have a significant impact on your community's emissions.

### Federal and provincial/territorial government policy

— Policies governing fuels or power generation may reduce emissions. New building codes or vehicle standards can improve the efficiency of these assets over time as they are built or replaced.

**Age and condition of assets** — Old buildings and vehicles are more easily retrofitted or replaced to increase efficiency. Note that adding new facilities or vehicles will increase overall emissions unless existing assets are replaced. If corporate acquisitions are planned but not confirmed, you can still influence their efficiency.

**Ownership and operation** — Some municipal assets may be owned or operated by other organizations such as waste management companies. You need to understand their emissions and how you can influence them.

### Choose a target-setting approach

**Top-down targets** are chosen before action planning and analysis occurs. They are usually based on targets established by other governments or organizations. Advantages of the top-down approach include low development cost and alignment with other jurisdictions. Disadvantages include a higher risk of not meeting the target and uncertainty about implementation costs.

**Bottom-up targets** are based on identifying possible actions and analyzing their potential to achieve the desired results by a specific year. Advantages include a better grasp of potential costs, greater confidence that targets can be met, and a clearer understanding of how to implement the programs. A bottom-up approach also allows you to adopt rigorous interim and sector-by-sector targets. Disadvantages

include higher costs, the need for technical expertise (particularly for community target setting), and the potential to set less aspirational targets.

Whether you choose a top-down or bottom-up approach, targets should be realistic, achievable, and reflect the need for significant action on climate change.



## Develop your targets

**Engage key players.** Whether you're setting corporate or community targets, engagement is essential. Engaging council and staff will help you understand the long-term implications of the target. Engaging stakeholder groups and the general public will help identify key issues and gauge community support. It will also help build buy-in among senior managers, key staff and community stakeholders who will be responsible for implementing actions.

**Select a timeframe.** Your timeframe needs to be relevant for your local context. Choose a recent base year with complete and reliable data. Choose a target year that's close enough to be relevant but distant enough to allow you to implement change and achieve reductions. It may be useful to match your target year to other jurisdictions, or to synchronize it with elements of your official community or sustainability plans.

**Set interim targets.** Progress against interim targets can provide a clear measurement of whether you're on track to meet your commitments.

## Update your targets

Target setting is not a one-time event; targets should be periodically re-evaluated to ensure they are appropriate. Some examples of when it may be appropriate to set a new target include:

**Approaching target year** — If the target year is approaching it is time to set a new target for the future.

**Overachieving** — If your community is exceeding expectations, you should consider setting more aggressive targets.

**Underachieving** — If there is truly no chance of achieving your targets, it is better to set new, more realistic targets.

**Significant community change** — Occasionally changes in a community will render targets irrelevant.

**Political change** — It may be necessary to re-visit the targets to adapt to a changing council vision.

**Strategic planning** — New planning exercises may allow you to set more aggressive or pragmatic targets.

## Steps to setting a target

1. Use your inventory to identify the emissions you have influence over.
2. Create a list of recognized targets from other jurisdictions.
3. Understand the impact of policies adopted by other orders of government.
4. Engage with council, staff, key stakeholders, and the public.
5. Select one or more targets to recommend to council, with key actions identified.

For details on how to set community and corporate targets, read the full guidebook: [www.fcm.ca/pcpmilestone2guide](http://www.fcm.ca/pcpmilestone2guide)

Visit [fcm.ca/pcp](http://fcm.ca/pcp) or call 1-877-997-9926 today and learn how PCP empowers municipalities to take action on climate change

