



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 18, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **SAPCO Update Report (FY 2021) and Audit of Strategies and Challenges**

In response to my previous memos to the Board dated [December 21, 2021](#) and [January 13, 2022](#), attached is a **SAPCO Update Report (FY 2021) and Audit of Strategies and Challenges**.

Background

To date, Pima County has had an exemplary commitment to sustainability since 2007. In 2017 the Board of Supervisors passed two landmark climate resolutions ([2017-39](#) and [2017-51](#)) that aligned the [Sustainability Action Plan for County Operations \(SAPCO\)](#) with the Paris Agreement, a global response to the 5th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report (AR5) released October 2014.

As reported in the [FY21 SAPCO Annual Report](#), Pima County is making slow progress to achieving its carbon reduction targets set in 2017, reducing emissions by 26-28% below 2005 levels. Decline in performance is seen in targets related to water use reduction, waste reduction, and in purchasing green products. Considerable progress has been made however, in increasing the number of electric vehicles in the County fleet as well as the number of trees planted and acres of green infrastructure installed.

The recently released (February 28, 2022) [6th Assessment Report \(AR6\)](#) by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has a strong global call for governing bodies to take greater action on reducing carbon emissions and for climate resilient development. The adverse impacts of climate change seen now and predicted for the future are far worse than originally anticipated. In response, the U.S. has also recently adopted a new target of a 50 percent reduction in carbon emissions and extended the deadline to 2030, as the nation's commitment to the Paris Agreement.

Audit Results and Next Steps

To facilitate how SAPCO strategies were being implemented by departments, I sent a memorandum to all County departments dated [February 8, 2022](#), together with a fillable SAPCO Implementation Strategies audit form and questionnaire. Departments were asked to identify current challenges and any necessary changes in approach or new strategies they might recommend for fulfilling the Plan goals. More than 30 departments provided responses.

The attached report contains results of the countywide implementation audit. Challenges expressed by departments indicate that sustainability efforts are currently dispersed and that the 90 implementation strategies are not clearly prioritized or assigned. Other challenges that were frequently expressed include lack of funding, the need for knowledgeable personnel, lack of time, and the need to have a more focused approach.

To help inform SAPCO’s next steps to overcome these barriers, potential funding sources have been identified. Additionally, a comparative review of local governmental sustainability programs in the western U.S. was conducted. Observations of this review include practices in other jurisdictions where sustainability elements are integrated in governmental operations, innovation is key for financial strategies, staff within departments/divisions are dedicated to address sustainability efforts and internal policies and practices are complemented by community-based efforts to increase transparency and accountability.

Based on the results of the audit and comparative review, several key recommendations for refocusing our sustainability efforts are offered as shown here:

Recommended Next Steps
Extend the plan to 2030
Increase carbon reduction target to 50% or 100% (net zero) below 2005 levels
Restructure annual reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Redefine target categories</i> • <i>Create RWRD sub-report within annual reports</i>
Align the County Climate Action Plan to ICLEI LGOP methodology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reformat greenhouse gas inventory calculations</i> • <i>Report wastewater facility treatment emissions separately from Pima County owned and occupied buildings and facility emissions (i.e. Target 1 in SAPCO)</i> • <i>Conduct further research to determine best practices for setting utility-appropriate carbon reduction targets and accounting for renewable energy improvements.</i> • <i>Remove Target 3 (i.e. Reduce carbon emissions from solid waste generation by 10%) from the Carbon Chapter</i> • <i>Include a report of employee commuter miles in every annual report</i>
Identify big fixes and conduct cost-benefit analyses
Launch and formation of Pima County’s employee Green Team – Green Stewards
Publish THRIVE, self-paced climate 101 training
Create a Sustainability Dashboard to showcase cross departmental efforts

Recommendations

This report serves as guidance for next steps to keep Pima County in its position of leadership by conforming SAPCO to climate-action best practices based on the latest scientific findings on climate change impacts (i.e. IPCC's AR6), the results of the implementation audit, and examples of best practices in other jurisdictions.

Following transmittal of this report, staff will bring a Resolution to the Board of Supervisors for approval to proceed with the following:

1. Revise the current SAPCO into a multi-year Climate Action Plan that extends the plan to 2030, and increases carbon reduction targets to 50% or 100% (net zero) below 2005 levels;
2. Identify high priority strategies for Carbon, Water, Landscapes, Materials, and Workforce;
3. Conduct cost benefit analyses for implementation of high priority strategies and identify available funding;
4. Adopt annual targets and departmental work plans to reach stated targets;
5. Align the County Climate Action Plan to ICLEI LGOP methodology
6. Launch Pima County's employee Green Team – Green Stewards
7. Publish THRIVE, a self-paced climate 101 training for the benefit of the County workforce.

Coordination and oversight of the pursuit of these efforts will continue to be assigned to Deputy County Administrator Carmine DeBonis Jr., with support of personnel from County Administration and department leadership from the Office of Sustainability and Conservation, Facilities Management, Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department and others.

JKL/dym

Attachment

- c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Yves Khawam, PhD, Assistant County Administrator for Public Works
Linda Mayro, Director, Office of Sustainability and Conservation
Sandra Maina, Sustainability Program Manager