

# Moving Clean Energy Forward in 2021

A year in review for Buffalo Niagara

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January 2022

# About this report

In 2016, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) launched the **Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program**, an initiative aimed at local governmental policies, programs, and projects that advance clean energy. Since the program started, the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI) has coordinated program support, technical assistance, and outreach efforts to get local and county governments in Erie and Niagara counties to participate in the program. Over the first five years, this work resulted in 21 municipalities participating in the program, and over \$750,000 in grant dollars coming into our region to further develop clean energy projects.

Now in its sixth year, the program structure changed and a new round of grant dollars is available to incentivize program participation. This report outlines what those changes look like and tallies how Buffalo Niagara communities performed through 2021.

### Moving One Region Forward

Local participation of the Clean Energy Communities program is a significant step toward implementing Buffalo Niagara's regional sustainable development plan - One Region Forward. Released in 2015 following three years of research, community engagement and partnership building, the plan offers dozens of strategies and actions that local actors (governments, organizations, businesses, etc.) can take to advance regional sustainability.

As one of the key partners behind the launch of One Region Forward, the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning and its Regional Institute (UBRI) continues to pursue projects that promote implementation of the plan. This commitment is embedded into UBRI's four pillars for supporting regional economic growth, as One Region Forward remains a centerpiece of the organization's focus on promoting sustainability in the Buffalo Niagara region.



## Moving One Region Forward through the Clean Energy Communities Program



A community driven Regional Plan for a more sustainable Buffalo Niagara



**Clean Energy Communities Program** offers tools for communities to become more **resilient and sustainable**



**The Clean Energy Communities program supports regional sustainability - one of UBRI's 4 pillars for growing regional economic development.**



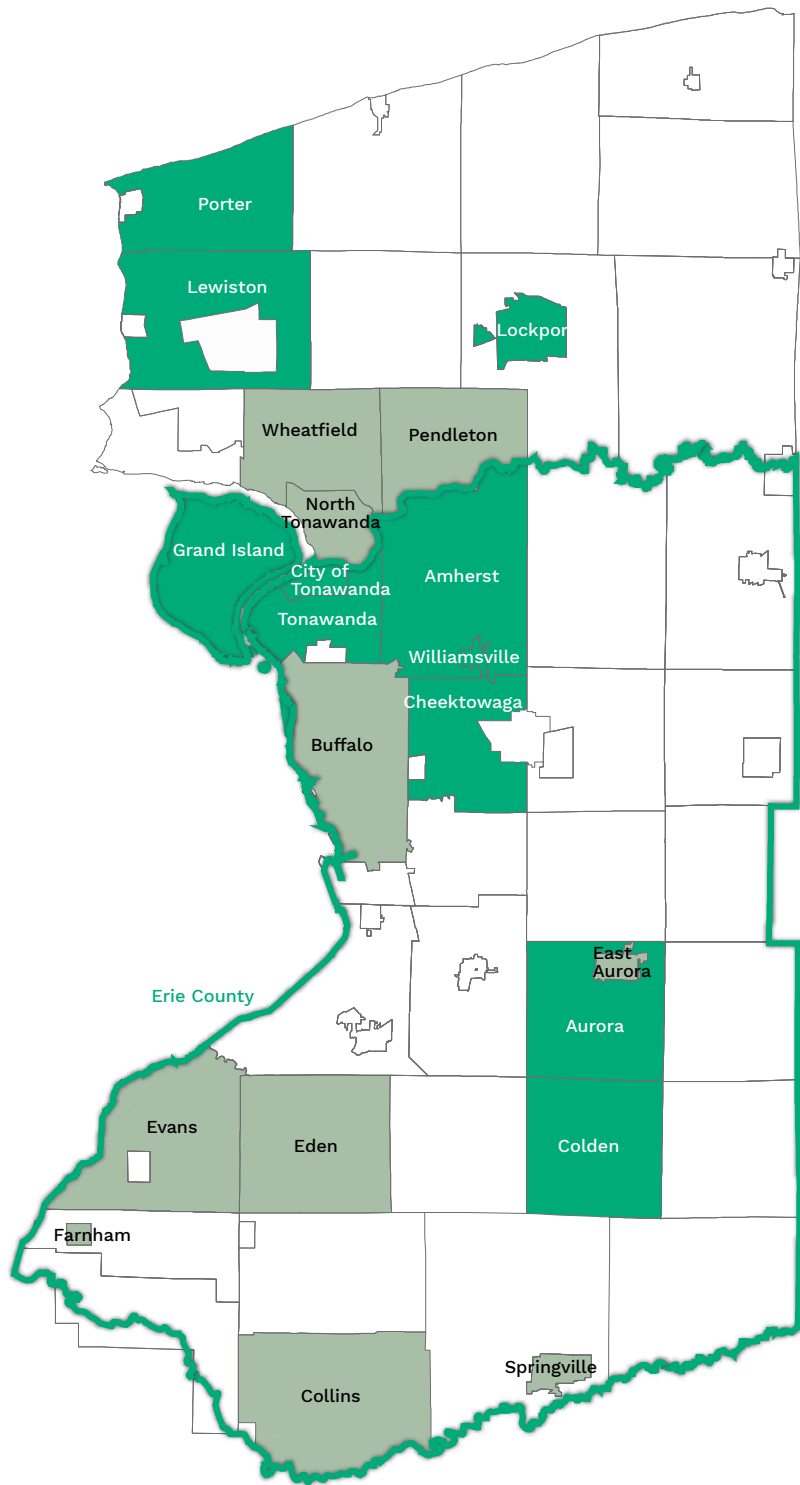
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# CEC Program participation in Buffalo Niagara

## Where we started the year

As the CEC Leadership Round launched, many regional municipalities were already program participants. This offered a strong base for growth in 2021.



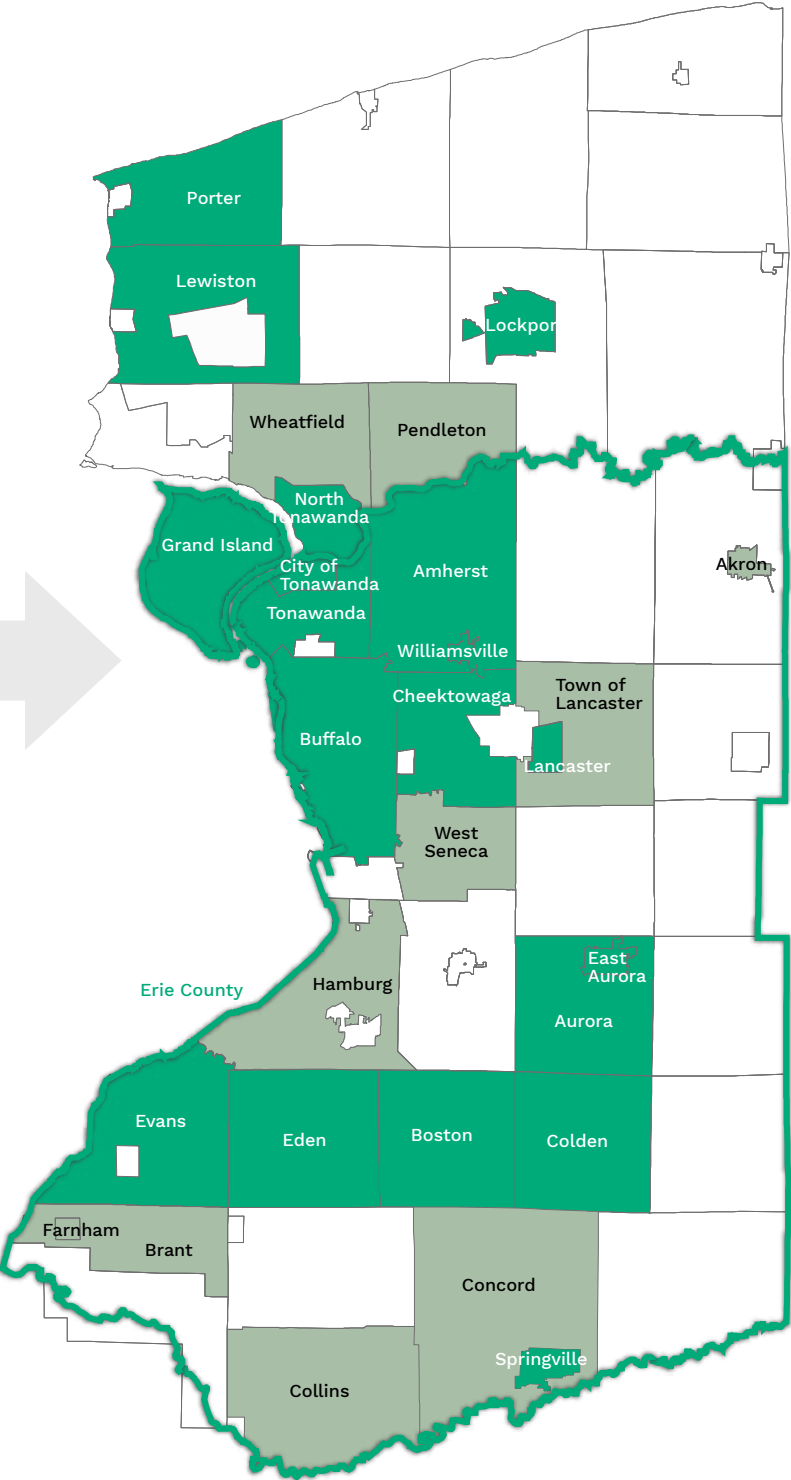
**22** communities participating in NYSERDA's CEC Program as of Dec. 2020

**12** Clean Energy Communities (Completed at least 4 High Impact Actions)

**10** Other Participating Communities (Completed at least one High Impact Action)

## Where we ended up in 2021

Throughout this year, new communities got involved with the program, while previously participating communities expanded their engagement by taking on additional High Impact Actions.



**30** communities participating in NYSERDA's CEC Program as of Dec. 2021

**20** Clean Energy Communities (Completed at least 4 High Impact Actions)

**10** Other Participating Communities (Completed at least one High Impact Action)

# The new CEC Leadership Round

The Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program promotes a series of “High Impact Actions” to help local communities reduce energy costs, create jobs, and improve the environment. When a community completes at least four actions, it becomes designated by NYSERDA as a “Clean Energy Community.”

### What are the High Impact Actions?

The High Impact Actions serve as a menu of clean energy practices for local municipalities. Some involve legislative action to align local policies with best practices. Others involve specific projects like upgrading street lights to LED technology, installing publicly-accessible electric vehicle charging stations, or making clean energy upgrades to municipal buildings. A third sub-set of actions involves engaging communities and municipal staff around clean energy opportunities, such as climate action planning, community campaigns, community energy purchasing, or local municipal staff trainings. While each action is different and involves various levels of effort to accomplish, all of the actions are geared toward making local communities stronger environments for clean energy.

### What is the incentive for pursuing the High Impact Actions?










Though each action offers its own unique benefits, NYSERDA awards points for each completed action. Once communities meet certain point thresholds by completing High Impact Actions, they qualify for first-come, first-serve grants that can be used to implement additional clean energy and sustainability projects.

### How do the High Impact Actions support One Region Forward?

One Region Forward’s climate action platform is based on the need to “conserve energy, promote renewables, and prepare for the impacts of climate change.” The High Impact Actions are all geared toward this focus, and are included in the recommended strategies and actions outlined in the One Region Forward Plan.











## Legislative Actions

These actions involve passing local legislation that make a municipality more friendly to clean energy.

POINTS		
	<b>Benchmarking</b> Pass a resolution and collect building energy data to track energy usage over time.	<b>Up to 1,100</b>
	<b>Municipal Buildings</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Advanced Reporting</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Large Private Buildings</b>	<b>800</b>
	<b>PACE Financing</b> Pass a local law allowing commercial property owners to access Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing.	<b>Up to 500</b>
	<b>Authorization of Open C-PACE Financing</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Completion of an Open C-PACE Project</b>	<b>300</b>
	<b>NY Stretch Energy Code</b> Adopt an energy code that is more stringent than the base energy code. <b>This action is eligible for an action grant (\$5,000 for small communities and \$50,000 for large communities).</b>	<b>Up to 1,200</b>
	<b>Unified Solar Permit</b> Adopt a resolution to utilize the New York State Unified Solar Permit, and update local solar permitting processes.	<b>200</b>














## Project Actions

Project-based actions involve investments in municipal facilities or infrastructure to embrace clean and efficient use of energy.

POINTS		
	<b>Clean Energy Upgrades</b> Document municipal facility upgrades that resulted in greenhouse gas reduction of at least 10%.	<b>500</b>
	<b>Clean Fleets</b> Purchase or lease an electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid for use in a municipal fleet, or install an electric vehicle charging station on municipal property.	<b>Up to 900</b>
	<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Station</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Light/Medium Duty Electric Vehicle</b>	<b>300</b>
	<b>Heavy Duty (Class 7 or 8) Electric Vehicle</b>	<b>400</b>
	<b>Clean Heating &amp; Cooling Demo</b> Install a ground- or air-source heat pump as a municipal facility’s primary heating, cooling, and water-heating system.	<b>700</b>
	<b>LED Street Lights</b> Convert a minimum of 50% of municipally-owned street lights to LED technology.	<b>Up to 900</b>
	<b>Decorative Street Lights</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Cobra-Head Street Lights</b>	<b>700</b>
	<b>100% Renewable Electricity</b> Buy renewable energy certificates to provide for all of the electricity supply needs of municipal government.	<b>500</b>

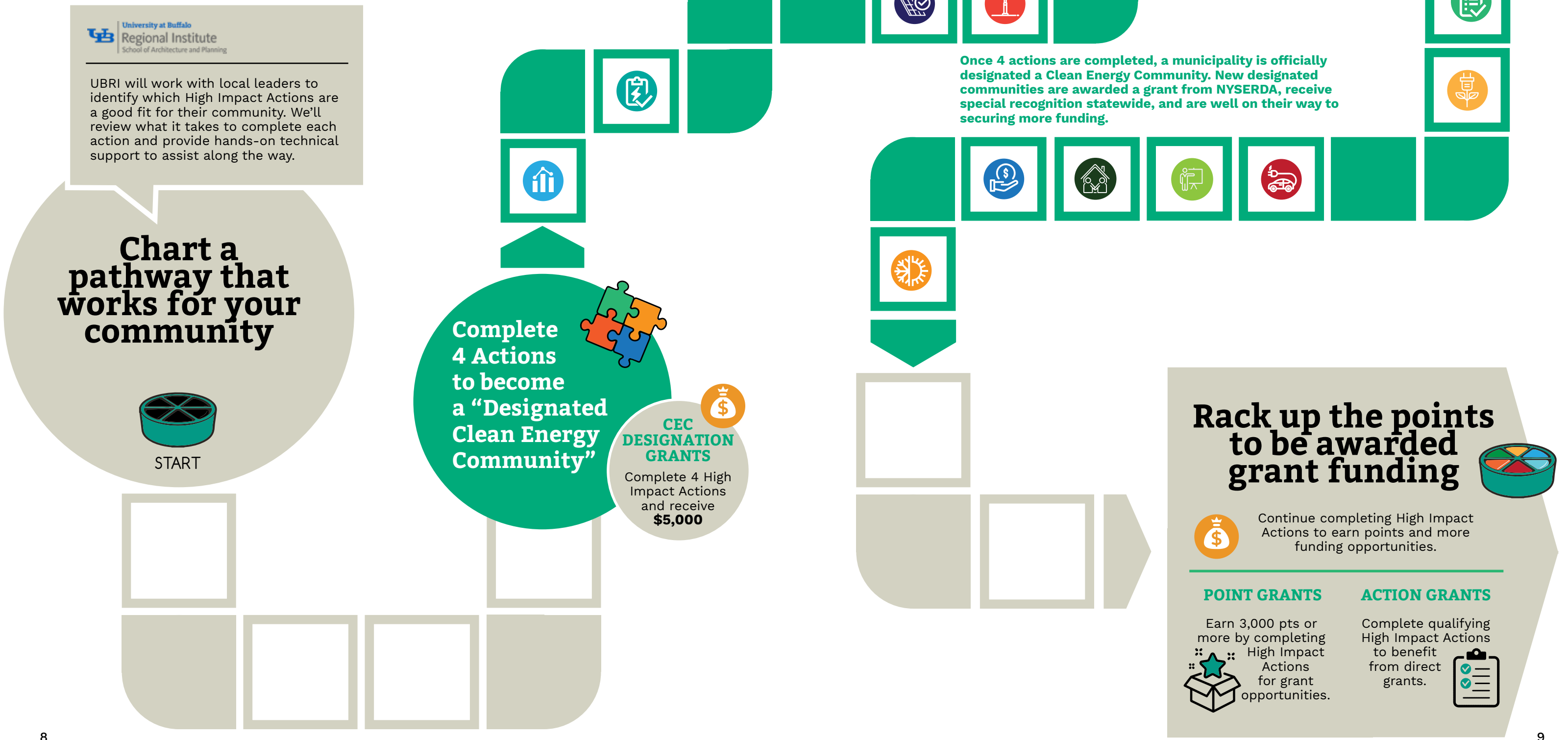
## Community Actions

Community actions involve engaging residents, property owners, and municipal staff in campaigns, planning exercises, or trainings that can advance clean energy goals.

POINTS		
	<b>Climate Smart Communities</b> Take the Climate Smart Communities Pledge and achieve “bronze” designation or higher.	<b>Up to 800</b>
	<b>Bronze Certification</b>	<b>600</b>
	<b>Silver Certification</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Community Campaigns</b> Encourage adoption of new, innovative technologies to generate value and savings for consumers while advancing New York’s clean energy goals.	<b>Up to 1,100</b>
	<b>Community Solar</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Electric Vehicles</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Clean Heating &amp; Cooling &amp; Energy Efficiency</b>	<b>500</b>
	<b>Demand Response</b>	<b>200</b>
	<b>Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)</b> Adopt a policy authorizing all residential and small business electric energy to come from clean energy sources (with an opt-out option).	<b>Up to 2,000</b>
	<b>Opt-Out Community Distributed Gen.</b>	<b>500</b>
	<b>100% Renewable Default Supply Mix</b>	<b>1,500</b>
	<b>Energy Code Enforcement Training</b> Have at least one code enforcement official (CEO) complete the NYSERDA-approved Energy Code Enforcement Training series for both residential and commercial applications.	<b>200</b>
	<b>County-Hosted Trainings</b> Complete one or more of the five trainings available to earn credit for the County-Hosted Trainings action.	<b>up to 1,500</b>

NEW

# Pathways to funding





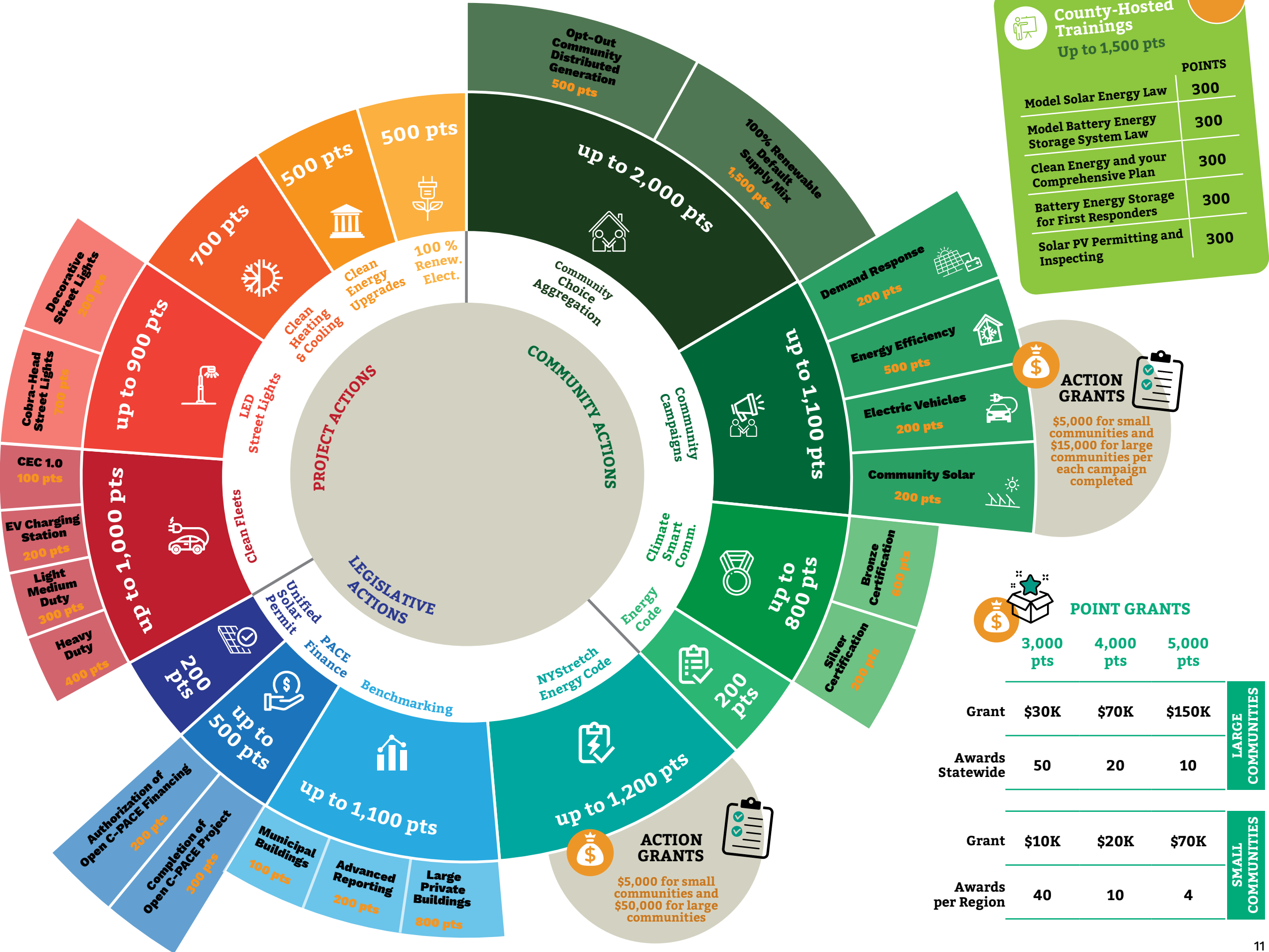
# How the point system works

Each completed action is associated with a set of points that count toward grant funding under the Clean Energy Communities program. Some actions have multiple tiers of points, depending on the degree to which a specific action is completed. Once actions are completed and documentation is submitted and accepted by NYSERDA, points are awarded to a community.

Some actions not only accrue points, but also come with “Action Grants” - special grant awards associated with completing that specific action. These grant dollars can be pooled together with points-based grant funding, or can be used for a specific project.



































Across NYS, there are a limited number of grants and municipalities that can claim them on a first-come, first-serve basis. Recognizing that the impact and effort to complete actions can vary by municipality size, there are different pools of grant dollars for large communities (population 40,000+) and small communities (population <40,000).

EARN  
3,000 pts OR  
MORE AND  
GET FUNDING












Participating communities in 2021

Clean Energy Communities Designation

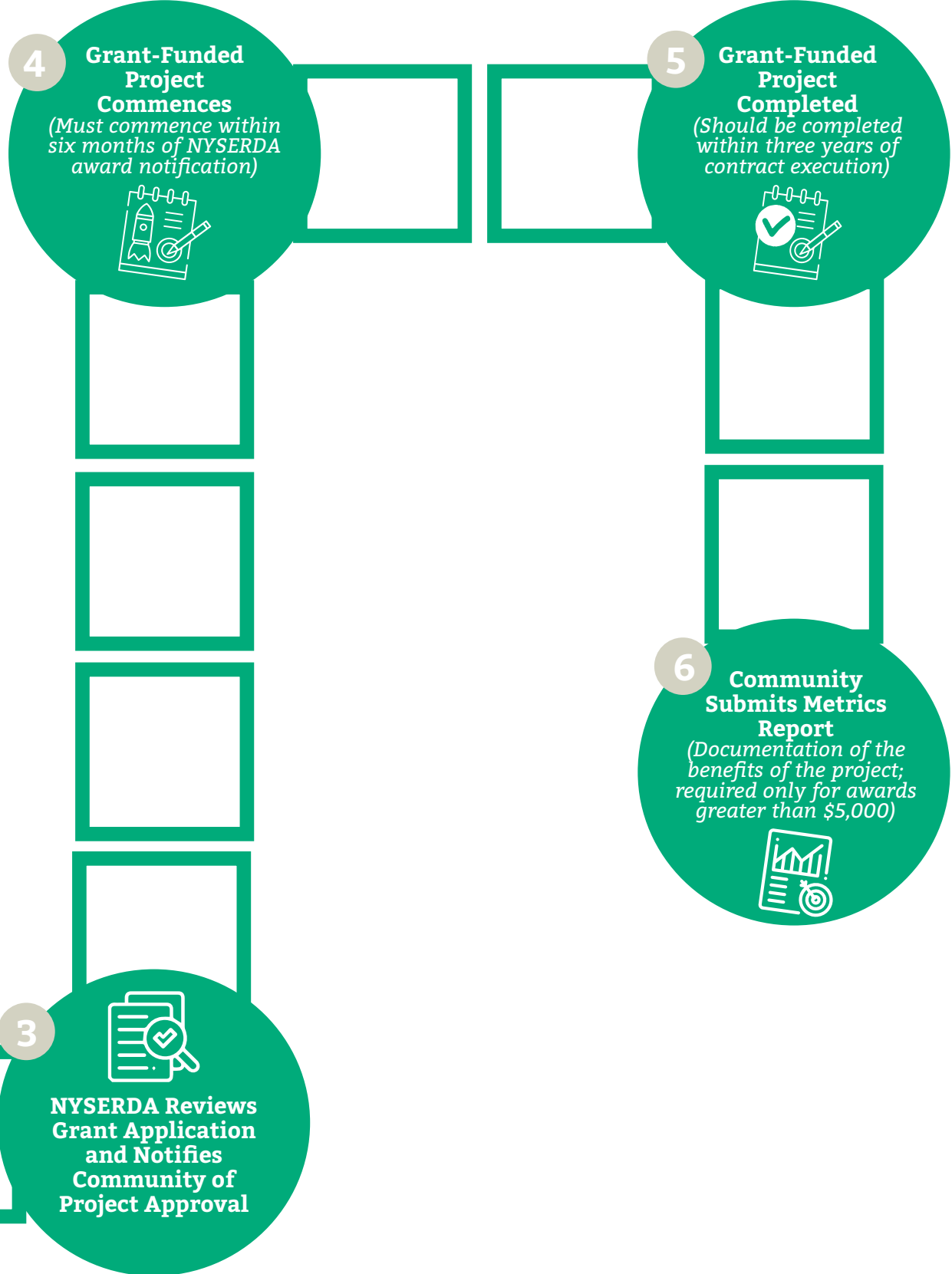
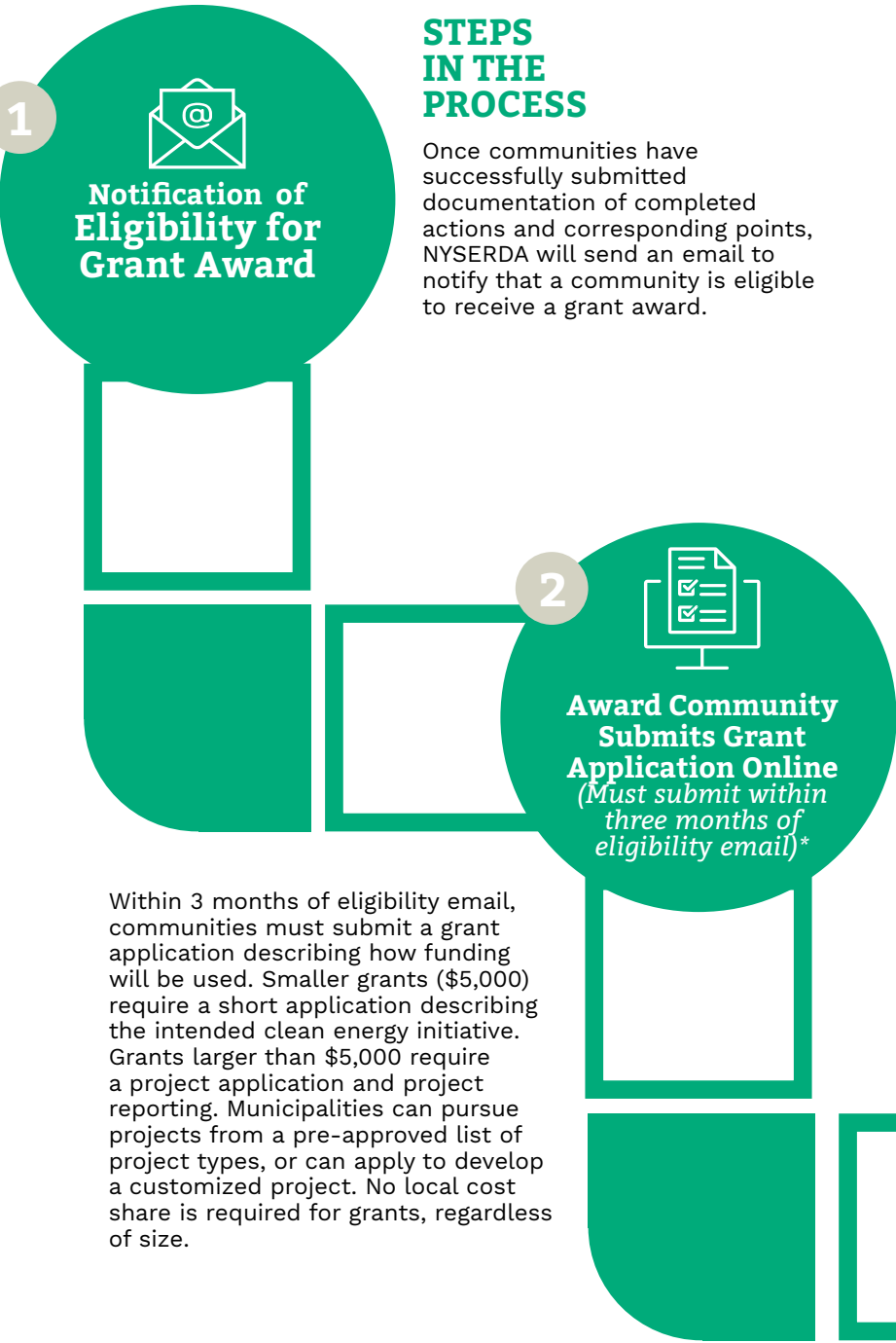
	 Benchmarking	 Energize NY Finance	 Unified Solar Permit	 NY Stretch Energy Code
 Erie County	100	200		
 Town of Aurora	300		200	
 Town of Colden	300		200	
 Town of Lewiston	100		200	
 Town of Porter			200	
 Town of Boston	100		200	
 Town of Eden	100		200	
 Village of Lancaster	300			
 City of Buffalo	100	500		
 Town of Grand Island	300		200	
 Town of Tonawanda			200	
 Village of East Aurora	300		200	
 Town of Lancaster				
 City of North Tonawanda	100	200		
 Village of Springville				
 Town of West Seneca				
 Town of Cheektowaga			200	
 City of Lockport	100	200	200	
 Town of Evans	300		200	
 Village of Akron				
 Town of Hamburg	300		200	
 City of Tonawanda	100		200	
 Village of Williamsville	100		200	
 Town of Amherst			200	
 Town of Brant				
 Town of Collins			200	
 Village of Farnham			200	
 Town of Concord				
 Town of Pendleton				
 Town of Wheatfield				

Completed Action before Leadership Round - No points

 Clean Energy Upgrades	 Clean Fleets	 Clean Heating & Cooling Demo	 LED Street Lights	 100% Renewable Electricity	 Climate Smart Communities	 Community Campaigns	 Community Choice Aggregation	 Energy Code Enforcement Training	TOTAL POINTS
	100	700	700		800	200			2800
500	100		700					200	2000
500			700					200	1900
500	100		700					200	1800
500	100		700					200	1700
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# How to claim grant dollars

Once a municipality accrues sufficient points for a grant award, it can start to design a clean energy project with their grant funding. UBRI can assist municipalities to design a project that meets community needs and maximizes impact.



## Looking to 2022

As 2022 gets underway, local communities are looking forward to building on the clean energy momentum.

For communities who started on this work in 2021 (or prior), UBRI will continue to assist efforts to complete actions and accrue points toward **securing grant dollars**. Several communities are actively working toward meeting the 3,000 point threshold and are anticipating meeting that goal in 2022.

Beyond supporting existing program participants, UBRI is eager to work with new communities to help them get started with the program. Several communities expressed interest in beginning their participation in 2022, and as new elected officials start their terms, additional communities will get involved.

Beyond the Clean Energy Communities program, **2022 offers new opportunities to support communities and organizations** committed to advancing local and regional sustainability goals. As a start, the new year will see expanded support for communities pursuing climate action planning and participation in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's **Climate Smart Communities program**.





# How to get involved

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UBRI can help you learn more about the Clean Energy Communities Program and to get started towards completing actions and earning points. Reach out to our Clean Energy Coordinator today for more information.

## Clean Energy Coordinator

**Jason Kulaszewski**

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Clean Energy Coordinators provide **free technical assistance to local governments** participating in the Clean Energy Communities program. **Contact Jason to find out how we can work together to reach sustainability goals in your community.**

Visit our website for more information and to register for our eNews:

**[www.regional-institute.buffalo.edu/cec](http://www.regional-institute.buffalo.edu/cec)**

For more information: **[www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Communities](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Communities)**