

Michigan Green Communities - Frequently Asked Questions

Find answers in this document to all your questions MGC from signing up for your account to filling out the Challenge.

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General Program Information

What is the Michigan Green Communities program & Challenge?

Michigan Green Communities (MGC) is a statewide network of local and state government staff and officials, and higher education institution staff that collaborate with one another, through peer learning and information sharing, to promote innovative sustainability, climate change, and environmental justice solutions at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. The core component of the MGC program is the MGC Challenge, an annual sustainability benchmarking program.

The MGC Challenge outlines actionable steps toward creating more environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant, and healthier communities. The Challenge consists of 23 metrics and 133 action items based on best practices in the areas of planning, water, climate resilience and adaptation, energy, community engagement, mobility, materials management, and economic development and land use. Between January 1 and May 1, local units of government report on the progress they have achieved towards sustainability actions through the previous calendar year in their community account on the MGC website to achieve Bronze, Silver, Gold, and now Platinum certification.

Who does the Michigan Green Communities program serve?

Michigan Green Communities is open to Michigan villages, townships, cities, and counties of all sizes.

Can I participate in MGC if I'm not affiliated with a local government?

Although non-profit organizations, foundations, service provider companies, or other relevant community stakeholders can be important partners in advancing community sustainability, climate change solutions, and environmental justice, the MGC Challenge is only open to local units of government. Staff from these other entities can still sign up to receive MGC communications and are eligible to attend some education/networking events.

What are the program costs to participate?

Participation in the Michigan Green Communities program and technical assistance cohorts are **entirely free of charge**.

Who is behind the Michigan Green Communities program?

The Michigan Municipal League administers the program, on behalf of its steering committee and funders, EGLE and MEDC. The steering committee is comprised of local government leaders and representatives from partnering state agencies and statewide organizations. See a full list of our steering committee members on our [About page](#).

Technical Assistance Offerings

What technical assistance does Michigan Green Communities offer?

Michigan Green Communities and its partners offer a variety of technical assistance cohorts and resources. These include the Accelerator Cohort and the Catalyst Leadership Circle (CLC) & Fellowship (CLCF), as well as the Sustainability Template Plan and Catalyst Communities Initiative. Read more about these technical assistance offerings below.

What is the Accelerator Cohort? Who is eligible to participate?

The MGC Accelerator Cohort (AC) is a technical assistance cohort for staff, elected, and appointed officials of **local units of government that have reached bronze or silver certification in the most recent MGC Challenge**. This cohort helps municipalities and counties accelerate their progress in embedding environmental sustainability in their operations, practices, and policies and move toward gold-level MGC Challenge certification.

The cohort operates on a “module” structure and bronze/silver MGC Challenge certified communities are able to join a module as their time and needs allow. Each module consists of 3-4 meetings (1 meeting/month) with subject matter experts to address sustainability issues in a small group setting. The Accelerator Cohort runs two modules per year, one in the spring and one in the fall. Past topics have included green infrastructure, materials management, and energy efficiency. The AC is administered by the Michigan Municipal League.

What is the Catalyst Leadership Circle (CLC) & Fellowship (CLCF)? Who is eligible to participate?

Participation in the CLC, managed by the [University of Michigan’s Graham Sustainability Institute Center for EmPowering Communities](#), is available **to silver, gold, and platinum MGC Challenge certified communities**. The CLC is a group of local governments that are leading the way toward increased sustainability across the state. Perks of participation include access to bi-monthly peer-sharing convenings with other local leaders, regular email updates on relevant resources and opportunities and eligibility to host a CLC Fellow that can assist with sustainability and clean energy projects.

By participating in the CLC (available to silver, gold and platinum MGC Challenge certified communities), communities can expand their office capacity and work with a graduate-level scholar during the [CLC Fellowship](#). This summer program, also managed by the University of Michigan’s Graham Sustainability Institute Center for EmPowering Communities, matches communities with students attending institutions across the state and a technical advisor to complete an advanced sustainability or clean energy project. Other communities across Michigan can use the fellowships’ end deliverables to reproduce results in other jurisdictions. All past projects descriptions and deliverables are [available here](#) as a resource for your community.



What is EGLE’s Catalyst Communities Initiative? What resources do they offer?

[The Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy \(EGLE\) Catalyst Communities Initiative](#) is a comprehensive program to provide education, training, planning and technical resources to local governments as they work toward their sustainability goals. MGC works closely with Catalyst Communities to align resources and program offerings to maximize the potential of resources in guiding communities through the sustainability planning and project implementation process.

Catalyst Communities offers resources on various environmental, social, and economic topics on their Resource Hub and through their monthly webinar series to help communities across Michigan make a just transition to decarbonization. The Catalyst Communities Resource Hub offers over 500 resources across nine categories to match the categories of action items in MGC’s annual Challenge.

What is MGC’s Sustainability Template Plan? Where can I find the toolkit?

In 2023, Michigan Green Communities created a template sustainability plan toolkit to help communities create sustainability plans sooner and start working toward environmental protection, environmental justice, and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. **The toolkit includes an internal-facing workplan, an external-facing sustainability plan, a one-page sustainability plan update template, and a user guide.**

The toolkit is [available for download here on our website.](#)

MGC Challenge, Action Items, & Resources

When is the Challenge reporting period open?

The Challenge reporting period is open January 1 to May 1 of each year for local units of government to report on the progress they have achieved towards sustainability actions through the previous calendar year.

My community is new to the Challenge. Where should I get started?

Check out our [Getting Started Guide](#)! This guide contains 15 action items that require relatively minimal resources to complete. Completing any 10 of the action items will earn a community bronze-level certification.

Where can I view a full list of action items?

A full list of action items is available to view [here on our website](#) or you can [download a PDF version here](#).

How many points can I earn through each action item?

Local units of government attain bronze, silver, gold, or platinum status based on the total number of action items that they designate as “in progress” or “complete”. Completed action items are worth 2 points towards Challenge status and “in progress” action items are worth 1 point.

How many points are required for each certification level?

20 points are required to achieve bronze status, 60 points for silver, and 100 points for gold.

In 2024, the MGC Challenge added a new platinum level certification to encourage communities to go above and beyond in their sustainability journeys. To earn platinum level certification, **a community must reach 175 points through completing action items, and achieve improvements or meet the local government’s stated goal in at least four of the following metrics:**

- Percent (%) reduction in GHG emissions from municipal/county operations from baseline year.
- Percent (%) reduction in community wide GHG emissions from baseline year.
- Percent (%) of energy supplied by renewable sources in municipal/county operations as compared to previous calendar year.
- Percent (%) reduction in water use from municipal/county operations in the 2023 calendar year.
- Community-wide water use per capita (compared to previous year).
- Percent (%) of county/municipal vehicle fleet that are EV/clean fuel vehicles (improve upon from previous year or reach 100%).
- Tree canopy cover (meet your community's stated goal for tree canopy cover).

What resources are available to help my community work through action items in the Challenge?

The [Catalyst Communities Resource Hub](#) is a great place to start. The 500+ resources available on this site include how-to guides, webinars, and community examples. Resources are organized into nine categories to match the structure of the MGC Challenge.

If you’re looking for a way to formalize your sustainability planning, download **MGC’s Template Sustainability Plan Toolkit**. This toolkit includes an internal-facing workplan, an external-facing sustainability plan, a one-page sustainability plan update template, and a user guide. It is [available for download here on our website](#).

MGC Account

How do I create an MGC account for my community?

1. Go to www.migreencommunities.com/register
2. Enter your community's information and your contact information
3. Wait for a confirmation email saying your account has been approved
4. Go to www.migreencommunities.com/login to access your account

How can I reset the password to my account?

If you have lost or can't remember your password, you can send yourself a password reset email (on the "My Account" page on the website). If you are still having trouble, please info@migreencommunities.com and we can send you a temporary password.

How do I access the MGC Challenge reporting form?

1. Log into your account – www.migreencommunities.com/login
2. Hover over "Challenge" and select "Complete the Challenge". This will take you to a page where you can choose to fill out the action item form or the metrics form.

Can I start filling out the Challenge form and come back to it later?

Yes, you can save your progress on your Challenge form before submitting. **Your saved responses will remain saved for 30 days** and will automatically populate in the form the next time you log in.

Are metrics required to submit the Challenge form?

No, metrics are not required for Bronze/Silver/Gold certification but are required for the new Platinum certification.

Who can I contact if I run into issues with my account or have questions about the MGC Challenge?

Please reach out to info@migreencommunities.com with any questions. We're happy to help!