Resilience & Sustainability Practices

Top 10-Findings
The Indiana Resilient Communities Study
Indiana University O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs
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What We Learned
1. Extreme weather and natural disasters are among Indiana local officials' most cited concerns.
   a. At least 3 in 4 Indiana city officials rate flooding and winter storms as areas of concern. Officials are also concerned about cybersecurity, drug addiction, and housing affordability.
2. Many cities have faced significant flooding in recent years and have been working to confront this challenge.
   a. A majority have identified locations likely to flood, developed an inventory of infrastructure needing modifications for heavier rains, and adopted ordinances or zoning codes to prevent flooding and/or minimize impacts.
3. Opportunities exist to improve government operations to make communities more resilient.
   a. Fewer than 1 in 3 cities has…
      i. Developed an inventory of its green stormwater infrastructure network
      ii. Engaged in activities related to resilience in economic development
      iii. Implemented a pilot incentive program for green infrastructure
      iv. Designed or installed transportation infrastructure for higher temperatures or more freeze-thaw events
      v. Constructed a green roof on a local government building
4. Cities are implementing a range of sustainability efforts to meet residents' needs now and in the future.
   a. About half or more cities have implemented a Buy Local campaign, encouraged bicycle use and security, raised public awareness of water conservation, and incentivized affordable housing.
5. There are opportunities to do more to make Indiana communities sustainable.
   a. Fewer than 1 in 10 cities has…
      i. Arranged carpool/vanpool assistance
      ii. Offered a class on organic farming
      iii. Provided low interest loans for energy efficiency measures or building materials
      iv. Expedited the application and permit process for environmentally friendly building standards
      v. Incentivized construction of green affordable housing
6. Who is responsible for planning these sustainability initiatives?
   a. About 8 in 10 cities say the responsibility for sustainability initiatives rests with city/town government. While there is no consensus on which office/unit should manage oversight, officials are most likely to identify the city/town council or commission, mayor's office, and planning unit.
7. Looking to the future… What are the biggest barriers cities face in trying to do more?
   a. More than 3 in 4 cities report a lack of financial resources or funding as one of their top three barriers to pursuing sustainability projects. About 1 in 4 indicates sustainability just is not a priority for it or its local businesses.
8. Cities do not have enough people dedicated to sustainability efforts

a. About 1 in 4 has paid staff (full- or part-time) dedicated to sustainability efforts. Most do not have a task force or a team of interns or volunteers supporting sustainability efforts.

9. Despite facing challenges, cities are taking important steps to finance sustainability initiatives.
    a. About half have applied for grant funding and a similar number have set aside resources in the budget. One in 3 has funded capital projects in this area.

10. Cities are also working together to create sustainable futures with the potential for more collaboration opportunities.
    a. About 6 in 10 cities participate in regional partnerships. However, fewer than 1 in 4 has an agreement with other local governments on climate or energy issues or has collaborated to develop an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions.

About the Study

Government officials from more than 170 Indiana cities and towns completed the survey between February 18 and July 20, 2022. It was part of a study on local government sustainability strategies and capacities funded by the National Science Foundation. Dr. Aaron Deslatte led the study with support from the IU Center for Survey Research.

This report summarizes survey results from the 67 communities with populations of 5,000 or more residents.

Questions
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