Resilience & Sustainability Practices

TOP-10 FINDINGS
THE INDIANA RESILIENT COMMUNITIES STUDY

Indiana University O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs

October 31, 2022

WHAT WE LEARNED

1 Extreme weather and natural disasters are among Indiana local officials' most cited concerns.

At least 3 in 4 Indiana city and town officials rate winter storms and tornadoes as areas of concern. Officials are also concerned about drug addiction, cybersecurity, and housing affordability.

2 Many cities/towns have faced significant flooding in recent years and have begun efforts to confront this challenge.

A majority have identified locations likely to flood and adopted ordinances to prevent flooding and/or minimize impacts.

3 Many opportunities exist to improve government operations and make communities more resilient.

Fewer than 1 in 5 cities/towns has . . .

- Engaged in any activities related to resilience in economic development
- Identified roads or bridges that may be more vulnerable to higher temperatures or more freeze-thaw events
- Developed an inventory of its green stormwater infrastructure network

None has implemented a pilot incentive program for green infrastructure or constructed a green roof on a local government building.

4 Cities/towns are implementing some sustainability efforts to meet residents' needs.

About 1 in 3 cities/towns has implemented a Buy Local campaign and a similar number has encouraged bicycle use.

5 There are opportunities to do more to make Indiana communities sustainable.

Fewer than 1 in 10 cities/towns has . . .

- Arranged carpool/vanpool assistance
- Offered a class on organic farming
- Provided low interest loans for energy efficiency measures or building materials
- Expedited the application and permit process for environmentally friendly building standards
- Incentivized construction of green affordable housing

6 Who is responsible for planning these sustainability initiatives?

About 3 in 4 cities/towns say the responsibility for sustainability initiatives rests with city/town government. Among those who believe responsibility rests with the city/town government, about half think the city/town council or commission should manage oversight, while another 1 in 10 suggests the town manager or chief administrative officer's unit should do so.

7 Looking to the future . . . what are the biggest barriers cities/towns face in trying to do more?

About 3 in 4 report a lack of financial resources or funding as a top-three barrier to pursuing sustainability projects. A majority report not having enough staff as a barrier. About 1 in 4 indicates that city/town staff lacks the needed experience or skills.

8 Cities/towns do not have enough people dedicated to sustainability efforts.

Fewer than 1 in 10 currently has paid staff dedicated to sustainability efforts or has help from a task force, interns, or volunteers.

9 Cities/towns rarely tap funding mechanisms to support sustainability initiatives.

The most used funding mechanism is applying for grants—and only 1 in 4 has done so.

10 There is the potential for more cities/towns to work together to create sustainable futures.

About 1 in 5 cities/towns participates in a regional partnership. And, rarely has any city made an agreement with other local governments on climate or energy issues—or 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 107 communities with fewer than 5,000 residents.

107

cities or towns with fewer than 5,000 residents

QUESTIONS

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