



KEY ACTION AREA:

Leverage catalytic local and state policies

The need

Climate-driven heat and wildfire smoke threaten human health and safety, including in the built environment.⁵⁵ Without changes to policy, buildings will continue to trap heat, workers will remain exposed to hazardous air, and neighborhoods already experiencing health and infrastructure inequities will be disproportionately impacted during emergencies. Proactive resilience policy ensures that new development, public spaces, and infrastructure are built with climate safety in mind, while strengthening protections for workers and frontline communities. By aligning local and state rules with real community needs and lived experience, the South-Central Puget Sound region and Washington state can reduce risk, lower long-term public costs, and ensure community and business partners benefit from a safer, healthier, climate-ready future.

Action plans for high-priority strategies

The following action plans outline steps to implement selected high-priority strategies and identify key partners and existing efforts to build on.



Washington state Capitol in Olympia, Washington



This is an excerpt from the C2ES Regional Action Roadmap for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke, informed from conversations from the South-Central Puget Sound Climate Resilient Communities Accelerator.

Find the full Roadmap here: <https://www.c2es.org/document/puget-sound-action-roadmap>.



HIGH-PRIORITY STRATEGY: Integrate the lived experiences and priorities of local communities and businesses into state heat and smoke resilience policy and programming.

Integrating the lived experiences and priorities of communities and businesses into state policy ensures that heat and smoke resilience decisions are grounded in real-world needs, public health impacts, and on-the-ground inequities. This action plan elevates community and business perspectives through coordinated engagement, shared data, and accessible advocacy tools to strengthen public health-informed state policies and create lasting pathways for local voices to shape Washington's heat and smoke resilience programming.

STEPS:

1. **Convene a regional working group** of nonprofits, community leaders, local business owners, employers, and other private-sector partners to work with state agency staff to identify concrete opportunities for local and regional voices to inform state heat and smoke policy and programming.
2. **Identify dedicated point person(s)** within an existing organization to support coordination of the regional working group, research, and advocacy on heat and smoke policy.
3. **Conduct a targeted assessment** of local regulations, programs, policies, and codes across the five counties—coordinated with the state's assessment of agency efforts—to identify how heat and smoke are currently addressed and where gaps limit preparedness and response.
4. **Collect and analyze regional quantitative and qualitative data** on heat and smoke impacts by partnering with schools, universities, and community organizations, building both local research capacity and a shared evidence base for policy advocacy.
5. **Translate regional priorities into actionable policy recommendations** and communicate them to state agency staff and decision-makers to advance adoption of heat and smoke policies and programs that support locally informed, equitable resilience outcomes. Meet with state agency staff and policymakers to identify opportunities to implement the recommendations.
6. **Synthesize outcomes from regional community engagement** efforts to demonstrate the value and impact of integrating local voices into state planning, policy development, and program design and implementation.
7. **Codevelop clear, accessible, and in-language materials** that summarize engagement outcomes and resulting recommendations to advocate for state policy change. Equip residents, local businesses, local government staff, and elected officials with tailored materials to advocate for policy change.
8. **Advocate for a sustainable funding mechanism** to support ongoing community engagement in regional and statewide policy development, ensuring underrepresented voices can consistently shape resilience policies and programs.

ESSENTIAL LEADERS AND PARTNERS:

- **Nonprofit:** nonprofits and community-based organizations, neighborhood groups
- **Public:** planning boards and departments, public health organizations, first responders, public health departments at the local and state levels, state agencies (Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Emergency Management Division, Department of Commerce), Washington State Building Code Council (SBCC), academic and research partners
- **Private:** academic and research partners, trade businesses, architects, hospitals and healthcare providers

EXAMPLES AND EXISTING EFFORTS:

- Washington State Department of Commerce's *Advancing Meaningful Engagement Grants*⁵⁶
- City of Seattle's *Green New Deal Oversight Board*⁵⁷