

## Why Community Engagement?

The Community Engagement Plan highlights initiatives internal to BHP staff, volunteers and partners in order to provide specific actions poised to promote and implement the full plan. Community engagement is already ingrained in each individual initiative and policy; therefore, actions listed here will be utilized to support the success of the entire Strategic Plan. The Community Engagement Committee serves as a resource for the BHP Community Council (BHPCC) and its subcommittees, sharing best practices during council meetings and providing guidance, as needed.

Community engagement with Buncombe County residents, community groups, and businesses is critical to achieving the county's goal and transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2042. The Blue Horizons Project (BHP) was created to enlist the support of the entire community and provide easy access to resources that allow everyone to be a part of creating a clean energy future.

### **The Community Engagement Plan**

In order to educate, engage and inspire action, we need to raise the visibility of the Blue Horizons Project, so people understand who we are, what we are trying to accomplish, and how we can support them in the clean energy transition. As such, the BHP's community engagement efforts focus on two important aspects of this work: 1) communications: raising awareness and expanding reach to drive positive impact and build trust and credibility, and 2) community engagement: engaging residents, community groups, and local businesses in energy-efficiency and clean-energy education and action that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Because community engagement lies at the heart of why the Blue Horizons Project was created, it is a cross-cutting function that will play a substantial role in supporting all BHP-led initiatives and policy changes that support the BHP's vision.

The following BHP-led activities will support the overall vision of the energy transition described in this strategic plan and specific initiatives and policy recommendations emerging from this plan:

### **Communications**

- Create a 30-second version of an updated BHP video to replace the 3:30-min version on the website by the end of 2023.
- Upgrades to BHP website layout, design, content (including automated customer journey directing them to appropriate resources). [Provide practical information for energy transition, financial incentives, installation assistance, and energy-saving tips.](#)

- Because BHP is a Green Built Alliance program, work with a local graphic designer to update and better align the BHP logo with GBA branding by adding a leaf (on or near the sun) and possibly adding similar colors by the end of 2023.
- When there is news to share, promote it on the BHP website, through BHP's digital media platforms and directly to local media outlets and key reporters to garner media interviews and secure earned media coverage. [Also create a running list of partner organizations and individuals that engage with diverse communities and promote news and events through their existing channels.](#)
- Run at least 1 local print ad and 1 local radio ad semi-annually to showcase equitable, clean energy progress in the region and promote the community climate challenge and/or countywide event (see below).

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- Lead and manage a month long, peer-to-peer community climate challenge, where people sign up to track and submit their climate-friendly actions on a weekly basis.
- With partners who share similar goals and objectives, plan and host – or co-host – at least 1 annual climate action-focused, countywide event that could include:
  - Prominent speakers, such as elected officials from the City and County, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community leaders, etc., including a live Q&A.
  - Expo booth showcasing a diverse array of private and public entities working to advance a just, clean energy future.
  - Award ceremony recognizing the top, most impactful local clean energy projects and companies of the year.
  - Eco-friendly prize raffle for residents who actively participated in the community climate challenge.
  - Live music from a well-known local band.
- [Engage the equity focus group to conduct research](#) and interviews with communities missing from previous engagement strategies. [Establish partnerships within diverse communities by inviting them to meetings, volunteering for their projects, sponsoring their initiatives and inviting them to participate in our media promotions.](#)
- Conduct an annual environmental justice survey to better understand the unique needs and challenges of communities experiencing disproportionate environmental harms and risks.
  - Share survey findings with the City and County.
  - If applicable, update the BHP Strategic Plan to ensure it addresses the findings.

- Promote survey findings within vulnerable communities to educate and engage residents in programs that help lower the energy burden, such as GBA's Energy Savers Network.
- Participate in and conduct outreach at least 10 relevant, local community events, speaking engagements, festivals, fairs, farmer's markets, and other forums per quarter, including BHP presentations to community groups, churches, non-profit organizations, and businesses.
  - Ensure Community Council members represent BHP by attending at least one GBA event per year.
  - Engage community members in the planning process to help ensure events are relevant and effective.
- Cast a wide net to reach Buncombe County and Asheville residents and businesses using culturally relevant, inclusive language, hashtags, and visuals on an array of digital media platforms, including BHP's website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, email newsletters, and paid digital advertisements.
- Increase engagement with BHP's digital media platforms by 5% quarterly, from a July 1, 2022, baseline, for a 20% cumulative increase across all platforms annually by:
  - Spotlighting at least 1 impactful clean energy project (e.g., solar, wind, electrification, microgrid, geothermal, storage, etc.) per month with an equity lens by telling stories from the people leading and benefitting from the project, including BIPOC communities. Address equity concerns within messaging, highlighting how renewable energy can help address these disparities.
  - Posting before, during and/or after relevant events, including key takeaways.
  - Producing and promoting at least 1 Energy Advice video per quarter.
  - Promoting relevant articles, blog posts, op-eds, community climate challenge highlights and resources.
  - Sharing and boosting important news and announcements with targeted, digital advertisements.
- Meet the outreach and performance goals laid out in the BHP contract.
- Engage BHPCC and staff in job training with the Energy Savers Network summer apprentice program, which focuses on youth, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Achieving the goals laid out in the BHP Strategic Plan requires significantly more community engagement than current staffing will allow. This extended effort will need to come from a combination of additional funding and expanded volunteer efforts from the BHPCC and those wanting greater involvement to achieve the local energy transition.

The BHP will track awareness, engagement, and impact for each of the relevant initiatives listed above to develop a baseline throughout the year. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will then be developed for all relevant initiatives by the end of 2023, aligning with contracts the BHP has in place with the City and County. The BHP will use the KPIs to evaluate performance and adjust, as necessary, on a semi-annual basis.

*Note: Text in blue represents recommendations in alignment with the [Equity and Inclusion Plan](#).*