

Cities Joining Ranks

POLICY NETWORKS ON THE RISE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Cities Joining Ranks — Policy Networks on the Rise offers the first systematic review of US city-to-city policy network activities, their media visibility, perceived value in the eyes of mayors, and membership composition. The report also provides novel insights into city peer groups based on an evaluation of network joining behavior.

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Results and the full copy of the report, along with all the figures noted, are available at www.surveyofmayors.com.

The proliferation of policy networks in the US, particularly in the environmental domain, has provided new opportunities for cities and mayors to unite around common causes. Yet, it has also generated some confusion about the organizations' respective roles and their scope of activities. This report seeks to shed light on key distinctions and perceived value in the eyes of mayors, addressing three guiding questions:

1. Why do mayors sign on to networks and compacts?
2. How do policy networks in the US compare to one another?
3. Who is joining which networks?

The analyses included here are based on a number of original data sets and sources, including a nationally representative survey of American mayors, network membership rolls, interviews with network representatives, and supplemental information from online sources. Fifteen networks with strong US memberships were reviewed, including 10 with a core focus on environmental issues and one each pertaining to immigrant inclusion, gun violence, violence involving men and boys of color, volunteering, and broadband access. Roughly half of the networks are focused on the US, while the other 50 percent have a more international footprint. City-level analyses chiefly focus on member cities with populations over 75,000 in order to align with the Menino Survey of Mayors, which also focused on those cities.

WHY MAYORS SIGN ON TO NETWORKS

Mayors cite a range of reasons for joining city-to-city networks and compacts, primarily focusing on the signaling power that network membership affords.

Rationale for Joining: The primary reasons mayors join networks include the opportunity to amplify their message by uniting around common interests (32 percent), signal to their local constituents that they share a particular priority (25 percent), and exchange best practices or other information with peer cities (23 percent.) Fourteen percent of mayors also report that they partake in network alliances as a response to a perceived leadership vacuum on related issues.

Sense of Agency: Mayors that have joined environmental city networks are significantly more likely to feel a sense of agency, relative to non-member mayors, to counteract current federal policies on climate change. It is important to note that at least one environmental network, We Are Still In, was formed in immediate response to the decision by the Trump Administration to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change.

SUMMARY DEFINITIONS OF THE NETWORKS

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, USA (1991): As an independent US regional network of a global organization, ICLEI USA has 188 US city and county members in addition to subnational jurisdictions and institutes of higher education committed to sustainability. It provides tools, protocols, and trainings to help staff of individual member cities advance their own sustainability objectives and facilitates inter-city dialogue around common challenges.

C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (2005): An exclusive, global network of 92 mega-cities and climate leader cities that seeks to speed up cities' progress towards achieving their own emission reduction goals by providing technical assistance, opportunities to engage in city-led technical networks, and access to tailored city intelligence and research products. Following separate competitive selection processes, cities can receive staffing and be paired with private sector companies to co-create mitigation solutions.

100 Resilient Cities (2013): A competitive global network of 100 cities, supported by The Rockefeller Foundation, that provides technical expertise, city staff funding, and forums for knowledge exchange to accepted cities, which seek to foster local, multidimensional resilience by identifying physical, economic and social stressors, and articulating a strategy to address them.

Climate Mayors (2014): A network of 389 mayors across the US that organizes and amplifies the collective voice and power of city halls in the media and encourages its members to develop voluntary, city-level GHG reduction goals. It offers regular opportunities for mayors and staffers to coordinate climate priorities and exchange best practices through moderated coordination calls that feature cities of all sizes and locations.

Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (2015): A global network of 20 cities that represents, connects, and provides technical guidance to mayors and city-level climate practitioners, who have committed to a GHG reduction goal of at least 80% by 2050. Catalyzing action around deep decarbonization in cities, the network helps fund systems-level policy innovations and provides peer sharing opportunities through coordination calls.

Under2 Coalition (2015): A global network of 205 cities, states, regions, and counties, which are committed to achieve GHG reductions of 80-95% by 2050, that supports the planning and progress reporting and provides the option for cities to engage directly with state and national government members.

Sierra Club Mayors for 100% Clean Energy Initiative (2016): A network of 185 US mayors, who signal their personal commitment to work towards realizing a goal of having 100% clean and renewable energy in their city. Endorsements by mayors for this vision signal policy priorities and are amplified through media outreach.

We Are Still In (2017): A North American network of networks that brings together 253 cities and counties of all sizes in addition to states, regions, tribes, universities, faith organizations, and businesses that pledge to uphold the Paris Agreement within their jurisdictions. Through media outreach, coordination with other climate networks

and its emphasis on its cross-sectoral membership, We Are Still In builds and maintains societal and political momentum around climate mitigation goals.

Chicago Climate Charter (North American Climate Summit) (2017): A coalition of 68 predominantly North American mayors, who signal their climate leadership by pledging to exceed their nation's official emission targets in their city and report publicly on their progress.

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (2017): A global city and local government network that includes 143 US cities and counties, committed to meet or exceed national mitigation goals by following a process of planning, target-setting, and outcome reporting. It was formed in 2017 via a merger of the US Compact of Mayors (2014) & EU's Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (2008) and focuses on developing reporting standards and protocols, and elevating cities in global climate diplomacy and in the eyes of investors.

Mayors Against Illegal Guns (2006): A network of 631 US mayors which provides technical and legal assistance, access to original research, and policy advocacy support to city leaders that advocate for stronger gun laws on a state by state basis. Folded into nonprofit Everytown for Gun Safety (2014) following merger of Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense in America.

Cities of Service (2009): An international network including 228 US cities that promotes citizen engagement, impact volunteering, and problem solving in cities by supporting project-based interventions through technical and targeted financial assistance. The network produces a variety of research materials and funds a dedicated staff person for a select group of cities.

Welcoming America (2009): A network of 62 US cities and counties in addition to states, regions, and nonprofits that helps to foster inclusive communities and institutionalize immigrant integration through peer exchanges, technical and financial assistance. The network makes available resources on policies, successful programs and partnerships, and offers to contract with its cities to audit their ongoing efforts on immigrant inclusion and recommend steps for improvement.

Cities United (2011): A network of 121 US mayors committed to developing a community-rooted strategic plan to end urban violence (with specific focus on African American men and boys), by providing venues to share best practices, disseminate research, and address the federal government with a collective voice. Guidance is provided through fellows, staff, and partner organizations.

Next Century Cities (2014): A network of 184 US cities and counties that seeks fast, affordable, and reliable internet access by sharing model policies, doing policy advocacy work, and linking cities with private sector partners. In addition to guidance on broadband policies and technical implementation issues, the network amplifies the voice of members in the media and as part of the regulatory process.

HOW NETWORKS COMPARE

The networks vary in meaningful ways in regard to whom they serve, how they started, and what they do. All are designed to be public-facing; they engage in media outreach and frequently advocate with other levels of government on behalf of their members.

Activities: Networks are chiefly focused on helping to amplify city priorities, foster city-to-city connections, and build local capacity. The most frequent activities they undertake include media outreach (15 of the 15 networks), conferences and convenings (14/15), best practice-sharing (13/15), advocacy (13/15), and technical assistance (12/15.) Roughly half of the networks also aggregate member activities or make projections via reports, provide some financial assistance, and facilitate public private partnerships. Only a handful offer accreditations or awards to member cities [see Table 3.]

Visibility: Climate networks, in particular, have enjoyed an uptick in media coverage in recent years. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group is featured most frequently among all environmental networks, garnering one of every three related references in online media outlets in 2017 [see Figures 2-4.]

Network Typologies: Based on the number and types of cities whom they cater to, we distinguish between two different types of environmental networks. “High-Hurdle” networks, including the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, C40, Under2 Coalition, and 100 Resilient Cities, have smaller member rolls mainly made up of highly networked cities that have set ambitious environmental targets. “Big Tent” networks, such as Climate Mayors, draw in many cities of varying size, policy maturity, and network activity.

Origins: Further distinctions relate to the network founders, as eight of the 15 networks were initiated by mayors for mayors. This suggests a remarkable level of policy entrepreneurship. Rather than only incubating local policies, mayors are creating new channels to connect, share ideas and elevate issues ranging from gun violence to broadband adoption.

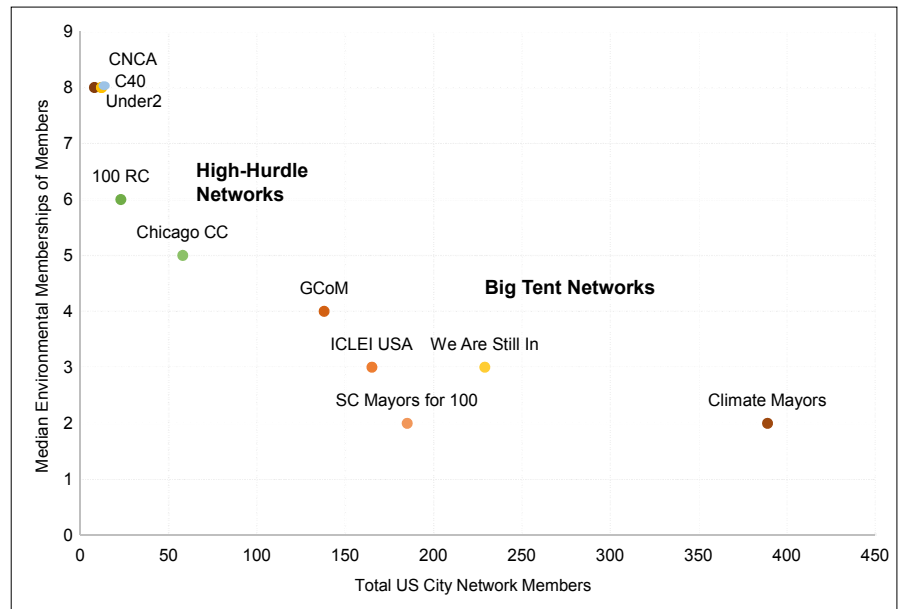
WHICH CITIES ARE JOINING

Fifty-nine percent of all US cities with populations over 75,000 participate in at least one of the 15 networks. In the environmental space, 41 percent of sample cities participate in at least one of the 10 related networks reviewed here, collectively representing 66.6 million US residents.

Active Joiner Cities: Cities that join networks tend to skew larger in terms of population than those that refrain from joining. The biggest US cities tend to be among the most active network joiners, although there are notable exceptions. Boulder, CO, Pittsburgh, PA, New Orleans, LA, and Berkeley, CA, are comparatively small cities, and yet all have joined seven or more environmental networks. Richmond, VA, and Akron, OH, are the two smaller cities that are among the most active joiners of non-environmental networks, participating in four out of the five studied. There is a strong correlation between membership in environmental and non-environmental city networks. In the vast majority of cases, cities are either members of both or none at all [see Figure 7.]

Local Voter Priorities: Partisanship of voters is associated with environmental network membership. Regardless of the political affiliation of the mayor, very few cities which voted for the Republican Presidential nominee in 2008 are in more than one (if any) environmental networks [see Figure 8.] This remains true in most Republican-led cities, even when there is county-level voter support for climate policies.

Delimiting High-Hurdle and Big Tent Networks

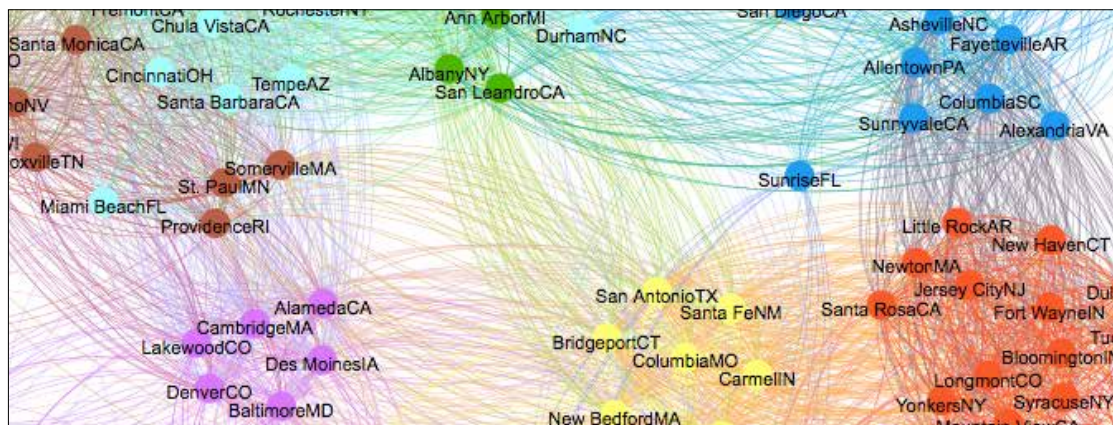


Environmental Networks: Top 13 Most Active Joiner Cities

City, State	Population Size	Mayor's Political Affiliation	Network Memberships		ICLEI USA	C40	100 RC	Climate Mayors	Under2 Coalition	CNCA	Sierra Club 100%	Global Covenant	WASI	Chicago CC
			Envrnmntl	Other										
New York City, NY	8,426,743	D	9	3	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Los Angeles, CA	3,900,794	D	9	4	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Boulder, CO	103,919	D	9	2	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
San Francisco, CA	840,763	D	8	3		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Seattle, WA	653,017	D	8	4		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Washington, D.C.	647,484	D	8	3	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Portland, OR	612,206	D	8	3	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Pittsburgh, PA	305,928	D	8	5	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Philadelphia, PA	1,555,072	D	7	4	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
Austin, TX	887,061	D	7	3	X	X		X	X			X	X	X
Boston, MA	650,281	D	7	5		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
New Orleans, LA	376,738	D	7	3	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
Berkeley, CA	117,386	D	7	2	X		X	X			X	X	X	X

City Connectivity: A social network analysis of membership rolls reveals clusters of cities which have similar membership profiles as well as even more tightly connected cliques of cities with identical memberships. Seven groups of five or more cities have identical environmental network memberships, suggesting similar values or levels of environmental advocacy and ambition [see Appendix 2 and Figure 10.] The city cluster map reveals peer groups that cities themselves may not be aware of, as they span geography and size. Cities can use the map to target future allies or visualize future membership trajectories [see Figures 10, 11.]

City Cluster Map Extract



Cities are linked if at least 2/3 of their memberships are identical; co-located cities have larger overlap in membership; and colors signal clusters of cities with similar membership profiles. [See Figure 10.]

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