Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy

Frequently Asked Questions

This document provides information for cities who are reporting to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System.

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General FAQ:

What is the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy?

The [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy](#) (GCoM) is the largest alliance for city climate leadership, uniting a global coalition of more than 10,000 cities and local governments who share a long-term vision of supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and moving towards a resilient and low-emission society. Led today by UN Secretary-General Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions Michael R. Bloomberg and European Commission Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans, the coalition comprises cities across 6 continents and 141 countries, representing over 950 million people – or more than 12% of the global population. Local governments committed to GCoM pledge to implement policies and undertake measures to: (i) reduce/limit greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) prepare for the impacts of climate change, (iii) increase access to sustainable energy, and (iv) track progress toward these objectives. In addition, GCoM cities connect and exchange knowledge and ideas, supported by relevant regional stakeholders.

In June 2016, Bloomberg Philanthropies and the European Commission merged the Covenant of Mayors with the Compact of Mayors to form the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy. Local governments that have made a commitment to either the Covenant of Mayors or the Compact of Mayors prior to the merger are automatically considered signatories to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and their relevant Regional/National Covenant, where one exists. For more information, [click here](#).

What are the Regional and National Covenants?

GCoM's Regional and National Covenants convene, encourage, and strengthen stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels to help accelerate city climate action. Building on local expertise and capacity, Regional and National Covenants oversee the development of technical assistance plans for cities, ensure that the Common Reporting Framework (CRF) is implemented region-wide, and recruit cities of all sizes to join the alliance. Critical to their mandate is the effort to tailor a globally coherent GCoM strategy to regional realities, ensuring effective planning, implementation, and evaluation that aligns with regional- and national-level priorities.

Each Regional or National Covenant is comprised of the city networks and partners who support and contribute to the implementation of the GCoM mission and vision. The list of current [Regional/National Covenants](#) includes:

- East Asia
- Eastern Europe & Central Asia
- European Union and Western Europe
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Latin America
- Middle East & North Africa
- North America – United States of America
- North America – Canada
- Oceania
- The Caribbean
- South Asia
- Southeast Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa

Why report to the Global Covenant of Mayors?

Cities committed to the GCoM initiative agree to make key climate data publicly available to the GCoM by regular reporting to monitor progress in achieving the aims of the alliance. Reporting can be done via one of the officially recognised reporting platforms of the GCoM:

❰ CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System (streamlining ICLEI's carbon*n* Climate Registry (cCR) and CDP's platform)
❰ The European Covenant of Mayors platform, My Covenant for GCoM European cities.

Benefits of disclosing data through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System for GCoM committed cities:

1. Badges and progress recognition: To recognize signatory progress, the GCoM alliance issues badges organized around the three pillars of the Common reporting Framework (CRF): mitigation, adaptation, and access to energy[1]. These badges, made visible on each city's profile via the GCoM website, helps highlight local government achievements through the GCoM journey and are uniquely earned through reporting efforts.

2. Aggregation and advocacy: Leveraging the public data reported by more than 10,000 cities and local governments around the world, the GCoM Secretariat compiles and publishes an annual aggregation report that highlights the collective progress and potential that cities represent on a global scale.

3. Integrated questionnaire: by answering one single questionnaire, cities can report to both CDP and GCoM and receive the benefits of reporting to both initiatives (e.g. global exposure, access to Cities Analytics).

4. Publicly reported data will automatically be shared with ICLEI´s carbonn Climate Registry.

5. ICLEI will use this data to inform research and analysis activities and to represent local and regional governments on the global stage through high level political advocacy work.

Has your city not yet committed to GCoM? Here are the benefits of committing to GCoM for reporting cities:

1. Cities can demonstrate their leadership by making a commitment to the Global Covenant of Mayors and reporting on their progress through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System. For information on how to join the GCoM initiative please consult this document.

   The GCoM provides cities:
   a. An opportunity to join the largest global alliance for city climate leadership
   b. Opportunities for cooperation, knowledge exchange, and networking
   c. Support for collaboration across levels of government and sectors

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[1] The GCoM is currently developing the Access to Energy pillar of the CRF. As there is currently no framework or guidance for this pillar, it is greyed out on all city profile pages. The pillar is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2021, and operational by 2022.

     d. Tailored support

     e. A unified voice at global level speaking on behalf of more than 10,000 cities and local governments

The GCoM offers cities:

     a. Harmonized reporting requirements, guidance, and tools to help accelerate climate action and reduce barriers to implementation

     b. Technical assistance and capacity-building

     c. Global partnerships to support solutions at-scale

     d. Global advocacy and communications campaigns

     e. Mobilization new investments in city climate action

     f. Coordinated strategy and governance

2. Integrated questionnaire: by answering one single questionnaire, cities can report to both CDP-ICLEI and GCoM and receive the benefits of reporting to both initiatives (e.g. global exposure, access to Cities Analytics).

What are GCoM badges?

The GCoM has defined a series of badges to recognize the effort and progress made by signatories throughout their GCoM journey. The badges are structured around the three pillars of the GCoM (mitigation, adaptation and access to energy) and each is further broken down into three phases, shown as progress bars in Figure 1 below.

The badges are issued according to the information reported by GCoM cities in one of the official GCoM reporting platforms.

The progress of each city is visually recognised on their online profile (city dashboard) on the GCoM website. Each badge lights up as soon as a city achieves compliance in a phase. The badges may also be displayed on the Regional Covenant websites.

The badges are intended to provide a sense of achievement and progression within the different phases of participation of a city in the GCoM initiative. The badges can also connect cities with opportunities, resources, and with cities engaged in the same steps or processes.

The GCoM also compiles an annual aggregation report that highlights the collective progress and projections through the analysis of data reported by GCoM signatories. This report showcases the results of aggregated local climate action for different purposes: UNFCCC process, communication assets, enhancing the visibility of climate action at city level, etc.

Figure 1: Pillars and phases of the GCoM Common Reporting Framework, as shown on the GCoM website.

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For detailed reporting guidance about obtaining badges and validation rules, please consult this document and this visual guide.

Reporting specific FAQ:

How does the Common Reporting Framework (CRF) tie into the unified reporting system?

The CDP-ICLEI unified reporting system fully integrates the CRF and related changes, which means that any data point required by the CRF can be reported through the system.

What is the Guidance Note?

The Guidance Note accompanies the original CRF with the purpose of explaining the framework and its applicability in more detail. It offers examples and references to help understand and correctly interpret the requirements and recommendations laid out by the CRF.

The Guidance Note complements the CRF but is not a methodological guidebook. It does not replace available guidance materials which exist from various sources. The Guidance Note provides reference to these extended resources and tools and how they can help cities in meeting the requirements of the CRF (see Annex 3 of the Guidance Note).

There are instances where the Guidance Note differs from the CRF, i.e. there are additional or excluded requirements compared to the original document. In these cases, the Guidance Note takes precedence over the original CRF document.

How is city data validated against the requirements of the CRF?

Once a city has submitted their data through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System, their questionnaire response will be validated against the requirements of the CRF.

Cities will receive an email with their compliance results from CDP or ICLEI including comprehensive feedback and recommendations for improving the data. Compliance is achieved once all the associated requirements of the CRF have been met. Cities have a chance to amend their response based on the feedback received and can reach out for support with their respective contact from CDP or ICLEI.

The city can go directly to input the data point within the questionnaire that is required for compliance. Main users can make any amendments to the 2021 response, please log in to your account and click 'Amend Submission' in your Cities 2021 block. There are further instructions available in the Cities User Guide.

Any amendments are reviewed and an email with the final compliance results will be sent to the city. The city's data will be shared with their respective Regional/National Covenant, who will send an official communication on behalf of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy to award the badges earned. These badges will also be displayed on the city's profile on the Global Covenant of Mayors website.

Cities and local governments located in countries covered by the [European Covenant of Mayors](#) and the [Covenant of Mayors East](#) will undergo a more in-depth 2nd level validation conducted by the [EU Joint Research Centre (JRC)](#). For more information on the 2nd level validation, please contact your regional helpdesk.

How often do cities have to report data to GCoM?

Once a city has achieved compliance in any of the badge phases it is necessary to report progress at least biannually (i.e. every other year). This is what the [CRF Guidance note](#) refers to as monitoring reports (please refer to page 64 for more information).

CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System strongly recommends that cities report progress on an annual basis. Reporting annually means that cities receive feedback on their progress on an annual basis, have access to Cities Analytics and ensures that the data is updated on the [CDP Open Data Portal](#). In addition, if cities want to benefit from the 'copy-forward' feature which simplifies the reporting process by allowing the copy-over of data reported in the previous year, it is essential to report every year as only the previous year's response will be copied.

Do cities have to attach their commitment letter every year to the questionnaire?

Cities are only required to attach their signed commitment letter to Question 0.2 of the questionnaire if they have not previously submitted it to their respective Regional Covenant.

What's the difference between a CRF and GPC inventory?

The CRF is the standard framework for cities to report their environmental data. It includes a series of requirements and recommendations defined by GCoM surrounding what information and level of detail cities should include in their inventories.

The CRF provides the flexibility to develop inventories in any methodology. So long as all mandatory information outlined in the CRF is provided (refer to the [CRF Guidance Note](#) for full details), cities can develop their inventory following the protocol of the GPC or any other protocol.

The GPC protocol is aligned with the CRF. For cities with a GPC inventory, [Appendix 1: Mapping of the CRF emission sources to the GPC](#) at the end of this document can be used to map the GPC subsectors to the CRF and ensure all emissions sources are included. Please also refer below for further details on the energy generation sector, which has additional disaggregation requirements in the CRF.

The notation keys used in your GPC inventory can also be used when reporting in the format of the CRF. However, please note that the notation key NE (not estimated) cannot be used for the mandatory subsectors required by the CRF.

As well as attaching a full copy of their GHG emissions inventory, GCoM cites are required to report their emissions in the format of the CRF in the questionnaire, including summary emissions (Question 4.6a) as well as activity data and emission factors (Question 4.5 within the attachment or 4.15). We recommend that cities refer to the full [CRF Guidance Note](#) to ensure all requirements of the CRF are met.

This supporting attachment can be a GPC, IPCC or any other relevant methodology.

Where should cities report GHG emissions from energy generation?

The CRF asks that cities report all GHG emissions from the generation of grid-supplied energy by facilities within their boundary, as well as by facilities owned by the local government outside the city boundary.

Cities should further disaggregate this subsector by:

- ◥ Electricity-only generation
- ◥ Heat/cold-only generation
- ◥ Combined Heat and Power (CHP) generation (including combined cooling, heat and power - CCHP)

This disaggregation is integrated into the CRF format inventory table in Question 4.6a of the questionnaire.

Furthermore, it is important that these emissions are **NOT** included in the GHG emissions inventory total, in order to avoid double-counting.

If developing a GPC inventory, GHG emissions from energy generation will be reported under subsector **I.4.4.** This subsector is already included in the CIRIS tool, and the tool should ensure the GHG emissions are excluded from the total. However, it is necessary to ensure that the emissions are disaggregated by the categories above, as this level of detail is not currently provided automatically in CIRIS or any other publicly available tool.

Where should cities report emissions from waste that is used for energy generation?

Emissions sourced from the use of waste for energy generation (including by-products of waste disposal and treatment, such as landfill gas, biogas, sludge, etc.) are considered energy-related emissions and therefore should be reported under the Stationary Energy sector. The notation key IE should be used in the relevant section for the waste sector, and a comment explaining where they have been included must be provided.

- ◥ If the energy generated is not grid-connected but used on-site, this should be reported as direct emissions, similar to fuel combustion or scope 1 where relevant
- ◥ If energy generated is supplied to the grid, this should be reported as indirect emissions

Additionally, the emissions need to be disclosed in the Energy Generation section of the inventory (see question above).

What is the Energy Access badge and when will cities receive more information on it?

In 2021, question 8.4 and question 8.5 are selected by GCoM as a preview of a broader set that will be associated with the Energy Access and Poverty Pillar (EAPP) of the GCoM Common Reporting Framework. In 2022, the full suite of questions for the Energy Access/Poverty Pillar will be included. Your report to these two questions will help us shape reporting and validation guidance in the future. Further details on the EAPP will be added to the Guidance Note as soon as this has been defined and formally adopted (expected later in 2021).

In the meantime, the Energy Access badge and phases will remain 'faded out' on the GCoM profiles as shown in Figure 1.

How often do cities need to develop an entirely new inventory?

Once a city achieves compliance for their inventory, they have reached the monitoring phase. From then on, they must report at least every four years on their emissions to the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System.

When reporting an inventory, two dates are of significance:

The **accounting year** of a GHG inventory is the year in which the data (i.e. activity data and emissions factors) used to calculate figures was collected.

The **reporting year** of a GHG inventory is the year in which the full inventory itself is submitted (i.e. reported) to the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System.

The accounting year of the inventory should be within 4 years of the reporting year (i.e. if an inventory is reported in 2021, the accounting year must be no older than 2017), unless it is the city's first inventory and the statistic records within the recent 4 years is difficult to find. As such, cities must update their inventory every 4 years, as shown in Table 1 below. Note that this requirement has been amended since 2019 based on the timelines of availability of data for cities to update their GHG inventories. Nonetheless, those cities with inventories already available in a shorter time period are highly encouraged to report.

If there haven't been significant changes in GHG emissions since the last inventory, the city can simply update their previous inventory data. This may include re-calculating those subsectors that have changed while leaving the rest as they were, or updating the calculations based on any changes in the jurisdiction (e.g. in population).

Inventory accounting Year	Inventory reporting year			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
2016	■			
2017	■	■		
2018	■	■	■	
2019	■	■	■	■
2020		■	■	■
2021			■	■
2022				■

■ Inventory is valid for this reporting year   ☐ Inventory not valid for this reporting year

Table 1: Allowed inventory accounting year with reporting year. The accounting year of the inventory should be within 4 years of the reporting year

What exactly is a monitoring report, and how do cities report this?

Once a city has achieved compliance in any of the badge phases, it is necessary to report progress at least biannually (i.e. every other year). Cities should monitor the progress made

against the measures and actions outlined in their plan(s) and towards achieving the goals and targets set.

Cities will be required to update relevant information:

- ❏ Basic information about the city (population, location, mayor, etc.).
- ❏ The target(s) and goal(s) set under the initiative.
- ❏ GHG emissions in the sectors covered by the GCoM and a summary of the main methodological information related to the inventory. For more information, see question above.
- ❏ The main results of the climate risk and vulnerability assessment. The assessment results and information reported previously must be confirmed if there are no changes or updated according to more recent assessments performed.
- ❏ A summary of the action plan, incl. a description of key actions.

What non-GCoM data will I need to report to CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System?

The 2021 Cities questionnaire contains GCoM questions along with questions asked by other initiatives. These contribute to cities' CDP scores but do not affect GCoM compliance (i.e. questions regarding Local Government Emissions, Energy, Transport, Food, Water Security, etc.).

Aside from GCoM requirements, the questionnaire has no minimum information requirements and cities can provide as much detail as they want or have available. Cities are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to ensure data completeness, higher CDP Scores and the chance of featuring in CDP's Cities A List. The difference between the GCoM badge and A List is illustrated here.

Who can cities contact if they need help accessing or reporting through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System?

Cities can contact either cities@cdp.net or their regional CDP contact. ICLEI cities can also reach out to their ICLEI regional contact and the carbon*n* Center - carbonn@iclei.org can direct queries to the appropriate person.

European city reporting FAQ:

What about European cities committed to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy?

Cities and local governments located in countries covered by the European Covenant of Mayors and the Covenant of Mayors East may choose to either report through the CDP-ICLEI Unified Reporting System or the My Covenant platform.

European Cities that have been reporting through either system prior to 2021 are encouraged to continue using that system. From 2021 onwards, cities committing to the Global/European Covenant of Mayors for the first time, or refreshing their commitments, may choose to report through either platform. European cities please consult a detailed reporting guidance from this page.

What is 2nd level validation?

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) performs second level validation of data reported by all cities and local governments located in countries covered by the

European Covenant of Mayors and the Covenant of Mayors East. This is a more in-depth analysis and involves an expert review and assessment of the city's action plan to consider whether it will meet the target that has been set. The aim is to provide useful feedback to cities.

Cities report via the Unified Reporting System can also enjoy the second validation by automated data sharing between CDP's open data portal and the JRC.

The 2nd level validation goes beyond the minimum requirements of the CRF and the awarding of badges in the 1st level validation.

For cities that have developed a SEACAP, can this be used to report to the Global Covenant of Mayors?

Cities can report their Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP) as an integrated mitigation and adaptation climate plan through the reporting platform of their choice. The relevant sections of the questionnaire can be competed with the information contained within the SEACAP. As long as all the mandatory requirements of the Common Reporting Framework (CRF) are covered in the plan and reported correspondingly, the city should reach compliance. We recommend that cities familiarize themselves with the requirements of CRF Guidance Note.

Resources

External resources

Resource	Description
Global Covenant of Mayors Technical FAQ	Technical FAQ for GCoM Signatories
Global Covenant of Mayors CRF	GCoM Common Reporting Framework
Global Covenant of Mayors Guidance Note	Explanatory guidance to accompany the CRF
CDP Cities GCoM Guidance	Cities 2021 questionnaire guidance
ICLEI Cities Reporting FAQ	FAQ for ICLEI cities reporting to the GCoM
How-to report to the Global Covenant of Mayors	Checklist style guidance for reporting and meeting compliance against the requirements of the CRF.
Visual how to guidance	Visual outline of how the CRF required questions align with the questionnaire platform

For a comprehensive list of further guidance materials, tools and resources for cities see also Annex 3 of the Global Covenant of Mayors Guidance Note.

Contacts

For any questions please get in touch with the Global Covenant of Mayors team at CDP:

- ◤ CDP Cities: cities@cdp.net

Appendix 1: Mapping of the CRF emission sources against the GPC

Sectors and sub-sectors in GCoM reporting framework	Included?		GPC (ref no.)
	Direct emissions	Indirect emissions	
Stationary Energy			
Residential buildings	Required	Required	I.1.1, I.1.2
Commercial building and facilities	Required	Required	I.2.1, I.2.2
Institutional buildings and facilities	Required	Required	
Industrial buildings and facilities	Required	Required	I.3.1, I.3.2, I.4.1, I.4.2
Agriculture	Required	Required	I.5.1, I.5.2
Fugitive emissions	Required		I.7.1, I.8.1
Transportation			
On-road	Required	Required	II.1.1, II.1.2
Rail	Required	Required	II.2.1, II.2.2
Waterborne navigation	Required	Required	II.3.1, II.3.2
Aviation	Required	Required	II.4.1, II.4.2
Off-road	Required	Required	II.5.1, II.5.2
Waste			
Solid waste disposal	Required		III.1.1, III.1.2
Biological treatment	Required		III.2.1, III.2.2
Incineration and open burning	Required		III.3.1, III.3.2
Wastewater	Required		III.4.1, III.4.2
Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU)			
Industrial Process	Optional		IV.1.1
Product Use	Optional		IV.2.1
Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)			
Livestock	Optional		V.1.1
Land use	Optional		V.2.1
Other AFOLU	Optional		V.3.1

Energy Generation			
Electricity-only generation	Required		
CHP generation	Required		I.4.4
Heat/cold generation	Required		
Local renewable generation	Optional	Optional	