

Hastings-on-Hastings

Public Engagement & Education Plan

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Produced by the
**Hastings-on-Hudson Climate Smart Communities Task Force
Public Engagement & Education Team**

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Background

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson has a long, rich history of educating its residents about climate change. Through consistent and ongoing community functions and events, the Village has, over time, influenced behavioral norms and helped foster a resilient network of residents who care about the environment. Our current Public Engagement and Education strategy has grown out of this history, and would not be possible without it.

In 2010, the Hastings-on-Hudson Village Board of Trustees, under Mayor Peter Swiderski, passed a resolution to become a Climate Smart Community (CSC). Under Mayor Nicola Armacost, the Village continued those efforts by creating a Climate Smart Communities Task Force (CSC TF) in 2019. The goal of the CSC TF is to complete and document CSC-recommended actions that address climate change and create a climate-resilient environment that can help the Village best adapt to climate change on a local level. Towards that end, the Village has set as a goal to reach CSC Silver certification status. The Hastings-on-Hudson CSC TF encourages, implements, and quantifies the Village's efforts towards the dual goals of mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

Using the framework of the New York State Climate Smart Communities Program, the Village plans to launch a concerted effort to address additional aspects of environmental protection and sustainability, primarily geared towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With the formation of the CSC TF, the goal has been to broaden and institutionalize our education and engagement efforts. We anticipate that teams or committees will be set up to address specific topics on which we plan to work, including the Public Education and Engagement Team (PEET), a Safe Routes to School Committee, a Natural Resources Inventory Committee, as well as other groups that will focus on a number of the initiatives outlined below.

Goals

Hastings-on-Hudson is fortunate to be a community with a large number of residents who already possess a relatively high degree of knowledge and concern about climate change and its impact on the world. The Village has a sizable population that is engaged and can be expected to mobilize to address serious threats. For these reasons, our engagement strategy is focused on energizing residents not only around general environmental awareness, but also on deeper and more detailed climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that will excite individuals and have meaningful impact.

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson strives to welcome and inspire all demographics of its population — including those who are typically under-represented or not engaged — to join together in becoming a community that works for resilience and sustainability. The Village engages residents who are experts on climate change issues as leaders in our efforts. Through a broad range of educational, inspiring, practical, fun, and creative events and activities, we will be able to reach a wide variety of people with different interests and styles of learning. Because we realize that climate change touches our values, behavior, and mental health, we plan to ensure that all residents feel engaged, effective, motivated, and positive. We will encourage ownership and leadership across the spectrum, and will work to involve Village staff, residents, local businesses, schools, and community organizations.

The strategic goals of the the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson Public Education and Engagement Team (PEET) can be summarized in the 7 E's:

A. **Educate** the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson community about the potential consequences of climate change, including sea level rise, flooding, and weather extremes; how to mitigate our impact; and ways to adapt to these increasingly likely events.

B. **Engage** and inspire our community to create and implement projects aimed at building a climate-smart and resilient village. Our aim is for these projects to be aligned with our more strategic climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

C. **Engineer** climate-smart solutions including infrastructure resiliency planning, innovative materials management, and use of energy efficient technologies.

D. **Emergency**. Help plan for emergency situations and work with our Village Emergency Team to mitigate the risks and effects of severe climate events, help educate vulnerable neighbors, and support the work of our volunteer emergency responders.

E. **Equity**. Locate populations particularly vulnerable to climate events and develop equitable solutions.

F. **Enact** policies, ordinances, and laws centered around climate mitigation and adaptation.

G. **Evaluate** what planned activities have been achieved, what activities are still pending and revise the plan as appropriate.

Each of these goals is outlined in greater detail below, as well as the planned projects and initiatives to achieve these goals.

Scope and Target Audiences

Leadership

In September of 2019, the Village Board of Trustees appointed a Climate Smart Community Task Force (CSC TF) to help the Village ramp up its engagement on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The CSC TF in turn set up a Public Engagement and Education Team (PEET), which will draft the CSC 2019/2020 plan and will document those initiatives that have been achieved. This report is a summary of the CSC Public Engagement and Education Plan. Progress will be reported as part of regular Climate Smart Communities updates to the Village Board.

Stakeholders and partners in the community that the CSC TF will work with as implementers and advisors include:

Youth

The youth of Hastings-on-Hudson must play a critical role in public education on the impact of climate change in our region as well as identifying what we can and must do to mitigate and adapt to it. The Village's Youth Advocate is an important ally in engaging our youth in this process. We will also work with groups including local Boy Scout and Girl Scout chapters, Girls on the Run, local youth athletic and religious groups, and the local chapter of Sunrise Movement.

Schools

While the school district is independent of the Village, the Village collaborates with its administration, teachers, and related student groups in a variety of ways. For the past five or more years, the Village, through its Conservation Commission and Youth Council, has worked with students in our schools. We intend to continue this collaboration and expand these relationships. Each year the Hastings High School Environment Club elects a student liaison to the Conservation Commission and the Youth Council. These representatives attend monthly meetings and help keep the Village and school communities apprised of relevant initiatives. In addition, we plan to continue to partner with the PTSA on the Safe Routes to School Committee, the Hillside Nature Guides Program, the Hillside Woods Restoration Project, and the Hastings Vine Squad. Future collaboration with school administration, interested faculty, and student clubs will lead to many opportunities for education and engagement.

Local Municipalities and Networks

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson has been part of Sustainable Westchester since its inception in 2014 and has participated in many of its initiatives including the CCA, Solarize Campaign, Waste Reduction and Recycling Program and, most recently, the HeatSmart Campaign. For the HeatSmart campaign, Hastings-on-Hudson has been working in partnership with the Village of Dobbs Ferry on a joint campaign. The effort is run by volunteers from the two communities under the auspices of

HeatSmart Westchester and is designed to help local homeowners learn about improved clean energy choices for their homes.

Businesses

Hastings-on-Hudson has made an explicit effort to promote “buy local”, and will continue to do so. In addition to the direct benefit to the local economy and merchants, buying local has the residual effect of encouraging walking and reducing car use among residents, thereby contributing to reducing greenhouse gasses (GHGs). The Village also supports the efforts of a much loved Farmers Market.

Our Downtown Advocate (hired in 2014) has promoted buying local over multiple years and has created a branded identity and initiative "[Destination Hastings.](#)" which is centered around promoting the notion of buying local. She has also developed the annual “Gift Guide” listing all the local establishments where holiday gifts can be purchased. The Village supports the “Destination Hastings” events by employing Village staff and the Downtown Advocate to develop and promote the events (including securing media coverage) by closing streets and by providing police and firefighter/EMS coverage. The Village also offers free holiday parking for approximately four weeks every year to encourage shopping locally.

Conservation Organizations

The Village looks to conservation organizations such as Riverkeeper, Scenic Hudson, Sustainable Westchester, Food and Water Watch, Groundwork Hudson Valley, and the Center for Sustainable Development for factual information and experts we can bring to the public regarding climate change-related activities and actions. Recently we have collaborated with Riverkeeper, Hudson Sloop Clearwater, the Pace Energy Center, and the Center for Sustainable Development on an educational forum related to the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, and plan to continue partnering with relevant conservation organizations to further our climate-related goals.

The Village joined 33 other Hudson Valley municipalities in the Hudson River Waterfront Alliance to successfully oppose a proposed US Coast Guard rule that would have added new barge anchorages on the Hudson River from Yonkers to Albany. In addition, the Village adopted a resolution urging the US Army Corps of Engineers to carry out more extensive study prior to adopting plans for massive storm surge barriers in NY York Harbor and its tributaries.

Hastings-on-Hudson has adopted the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan and is a participating community in the Greenway Compact. Westchester County is one of 13 counties that make up the [Hudson River Valley Greenway](#), which was established in the State of New York by the Hudson River Valley Greenway Act of 1991. The Greenway is a voluntary regional cooperation among 242 communities within 13 counties bordering the Hudson River. The Greenway was created to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources, while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. The 1991 Act established the Greenway Council, a New York State Agency to work with local government to enhance local land use planning; create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley; and provide

community planning grants, compact grants, and technical assistance to help communities develop a vision for their future.

Community-Based Organizations

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson routinely collaborates with local entities including the Hastings-on-Hudson Education Foundation, Hastings Historical Society, Andrus On Hudson, the Graham School, the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, River Arts Foundation, and religious institutions. The Village will continue these collaborations, as well as its support of climate change-oriented local groups, such as the Environment Committee of NYCD-16 Indivisible and Extinction Rebellion Lower Westchester, by supplying free meeting and event presentation space in the James V. Harmon Community Center and Hastings Public Library.

Regional and National Partners

The Village joined the national Climate Mayors organization in 2017 to promote local actions and coordinate municipal responses at the national level to climate change. In addition, the Village joined the Global Covenant of Mayors and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (formerly the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives) to learn about best practices and access tools and resources to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Board of Trustees passed a resolution pledging commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Village intends to continue these commitments and partnerships, as well as with other Climate Smart Communities, and regional partners such Sustainable Westchester and Sustainable Hudson Valley.

Activity Planning

The CSC TF Public Education and Engagement Team (PEET) has developed a strategic communications strategy to promote CSC TF initiatives in the 2019 to 2021 period. The ongoing and planned initiatives are outlined below under the 7 E's rubric described above.

Educate

The Village plans to make climate mitigation and adaptation education a key priority. We plan to maintain a flexible and adaptive approach that tailors educational content to specific constituencies and stakeholder groups.

Climate Action Webpages and Social Media

The CSC TF, in collaboration with the Conservation Commission and other Village Boards and Commissions, will create and update a new area addressing climate change [on our Village website](#) that aims to educate residents about climate change adaptation and mitigation. The website area will include links to important Village documents and policies focused on sustainability such as our Green Building Code, and energy reduction programs; links to action-oriented resources; and links to partner websites. There will also be other resources including a library of webinars and a list of film, TV, and video resources. This site will be updated regularly. In addition social media will be used to promote sustainability-related initiatives.

Climate Action Events and Webinars for the Public

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson is planning a standalone Earth Day event on April 26th, 2020 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Dozens of local and neighboring vendors will be recruited to sell green products and services. In addition, food vendors, entertainment, and educational tables and exhibits will be included to motivate members of the public to reduce their carbon footprint and shift to a local green economy. Marketing will include a website, invitation and educational emails to local vendors, and Village-wide emails. Also, we plan to close down one of the main downtown streets for the afternoon and to engage the environmentally-themed musical act, *Bash the Trash*. This group performs and educates using musical instruments made from reused and repurposed materials, and combines science, music, and environmental awareness through performances, programs, and social initiatives, focused on how art and science work together. (<https://www.bashthetrash.com/about>)

Climate Change Awareness Workshops for Village Employees

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson aims to work with Village staff and the public to increase education around climate change. This includes reaching out to Village departments and department heads to provide background and context on climate change, as well as brainstorming ways to mitigate our Village's impact and to help the Village adapt to the extreme climate events that it will likely encounter in the decades to come.

Natural Resources Inventory

The Climate Smart Community Task Force plans to create a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) Committee to produce a comprehensive inventory of the natural resources existing in the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson. An NRI inventories the natural resources of an area, both physical and biological, and provides an educational foundation for municipal land-use and conservation planning.

Engage

Engaging and inspiring the community to create and implement projects is critical to building a climate-smart and resilient village. Our aim is for these projects to be aligned with our more strategic climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

HeatSmart

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson has partnered with the Village of Dobbs Ferry on a joint HeatSmart energy reduction campaign. The effort will be run by volunteers from the two communities under the auspices of HeatSmart Westchester during the remainder of 2019 and into 2020. The campaign is reaching out to residents, businesses, institutions, and participants within the community to help local homeowners learn about improved clean energy choices for their homes and motivate them to reduce their energy use. The campaign is sponsored in partnership with Sustainable Westchester, Energize NY, Abundant Efficiency, and NYSERDA. The organizing team is a sub-group composed of members of the Conservation Commission and the CSC TF.

Community Solar

During 2019/2020, the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to introduce residents to Community Solar via a campaign organized by Sustainable Westchester. The program will support expansion of solar energy capacity by enabling a local resident or business to subscribe to a portion of the electricity produced by a nearby solar installation. This installation generates and delivers electricity into the local electric grid, producing bill credits which are distributed to subscribers. Each month subscribers receive the credits on their electric bills, reducing their electricity charges, and are billed at a discount to the value of the credits. Community solar enables residents whose own homes are not suitable for solar to benefit financially while supporting the reduction of GHGs.

Pollinator Pathways

Under auspices of the Conservation Commission, the Village plans to launch a pollinator pathway campaign to educate the public about the importance of butterflies and bees and to encourage the resurgence of these insects in the Village. The initiative will also promote the cultivation of vegetable gardens and fruit trees.

Bioblitz

The Village plans to hold a Hastings-on-Hudson [Bioblitz](#) in National Geographic's free iNaturalist app. The Bioblitz will be a meaningful and enjoyable way to celebrate Earth Month in Hastings-on-Hudson.

Residents will be invited to take pictures on their smartphones of living things they find in their yards or our woods and public spaces, and the iNaturalist app will automatically log each discovery, with its location, in the Bioblitz. The iNaturalist community of a million other users will help to identify what is captured.

Village Staff Engagement

The CSC TF plans to engage members of the Village emergency response cohort to better understand their critical role in climate emergencies. They intend to solicit staff expertise on planned initiatives such as developing a heat emergency plan, creating a climate vulnerability assessment and updating the green building code. They will also engage staff members on recycling efforts within the Village including initiating a new food scrap recycling within Village offices. The team will work with Village staff to document energy reduction efforts and other CSC actions.

Climate Stories Project

The PEET plans to develop public events with the Climate Stories Project that engage local artists and psychologists. Workshops will be designed to help residents connect with climate grief and other feelings about climate change and our environment. They will include outdoor trance poetic writing walks, guided nature walks, “forest yoga,” and other ways of getting in touch with nature.

Lawn Care Campaign

The Village already has a summer leaf-blower ban and issues annual reminders. Under the auspices of the Conservation Commission, efforts will be made to harmonize approaches among neighboring villages so as to ensure a more coordinated and unified approach to enforcement and to engage the public and landscapers in developing more climate friendly approaches to lawn care.

Engineer

The Village aims to address infrastructure resiliency planning, innovative materials management, and use of energy efficient technologies. Through leveraging the expertise of other organizations and smart technology, we aim to engineer climate-smart solutions for the Village.

Climate Action Plan

During the upcoming 18 months, the Village will develop a climate action plan to delineate the next steps in reducing GHG emissions and building resiliency. The plan will be a strategy document that sets goals, defines GHG reduction targets, and identifies priority actions. It will require substantial community engagement. The PEET will play a role in informing the public about the goals and progress of the Climate Action Plan.

Electric Vehicles

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to celebrate National Drive Electric Week by promoting its new EV charging stations and by inviting EV manufacturers and owners to share their knowledge with the public and promote EV ownership. The PEET will inform the public about these events.

Hillside Woods Restoration Project

After superstorm Sandy, which barreled through Hastings-on-Hudson on the heels of “Snowtober,” the freak October snow dump of 2011, the Village turned its attention to our local hundred-acre woods and the threat that climate change and human neglect poses to its ecosystem. A sub-committee made up of members of several of the Villages Boards and Commissions, including the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission and the CSC TF, is working to heighten awareness of the importance of this ecosystem. The sub-committee plans to define steps and take action to restore the health of the woods and aid in its long-term protection.

Arbor Day

Each year the Village celebrates Arbor Day, the annual observance of the importance of trees in our lives. First observed in Nebraska in 1872, it is a day when people around the world plant trees and celebrate environmental stewardship. Our Village was recognized as a Tree City USA Community by the National Arbor Day Foundation 35 years ago. The Village plans to continue this tradition during the upcoming year and plant trees on Arbor Day.

Emergency

The Village plans to undertake research to better understand climate threats, how they affect Village assets and how to mitigate the risk of severe climate events.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment

During 2019/2020, the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to draft a climate vulnerability assessment as a key element of our Climate Action Plan. The assessment will be developed based on input from the public as well as Village staff and relevant boards and commissions of the Village. The process will include research, surveys, interviews with the Village Emergency Management team, and public workshops. The goal is to identify Village assets that are vulnerable to climate change, including existing structures and systems, and to identify vulnerable neighborhoods and populations and the potential climate-related threats to those assets and social segments. The process will address vulnerability risk levels, priorities, and goals for future climate action. The work will be carried out by a subgroup of the CSC TF.

Heat Emergency Plan

During 2019/2020, the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to develop a Heat Emergency Plan. The effort will tap the knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders including the Village Emergency Management team and will result in a report designed to outline key risks, vulnerable populations, and suggested mitigation protocols. The work will be carried out by a subgroup of the CSC TF.

Equity

The Village is committed to ensuring that its approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation is equitable. This means locating populations particularly vulnerable to climate events and ensuring that climate mitigation and adaptation efforts benefit them.

Safe Routes to School

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson traces the origins of its Safe Routes to School program to November 2014, when it adopted the *Complete Streets Initiative* and began putting in place its recommendations for safer streets. The Hastings Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Committee is comprised of a cross section of community leaders including Village officials, school administrators, PTSA members, and interested residents committed to building on prior accomplishments and to making further improvements. SRTS Committee members work closely with the school district and the Village to ensure that the key elements of a SRTS program are in place. Their goal is to make the Village safer and more accessible to students from all neighborhoods, including those that have traditionally had fewer safe routes. HOH Safe Routes to School Committee meets regularly and has a [Web presence](#) for educational purposes in partnership with the Village. The current plan is to initiate pedestrian and bike-friendly changes and traffic-calming measures that would benefit students walking and biking to school, as well as pedestrians in general.

Senior Outreach Program

The Village has a Senior Outreach program that offers resources, support, and advocacy to Hasting's villagers 62 and over. The CSC TF will work with the Senior Outreach Coordinator to ensure that climate change efforts take into consideration the needs of seniors. The PEET will develop material designed to inform seniors about how climate change might affect them and how they might better prepare for severe weather events such as heat emergencies.

Youth Outreach

The CSC TF plans to engage and enlist youth in our activities, as well as incorporate their perspectives and feedback into educational and outreach resources and materials. In addition, the Village has a Youth Advocate Program that, in coordination with the Village Youth Council, organizes a wide range of services including educational and prevention programs in the schools and the community, after-school recreational activities, homework help, counseling, computer access at the Community Center, Safe Rides, Help-a-Child, and the Hastings Food Pantry. The CSC TF will work with YAP to engage and educate vulnerable youth about climate change impacts and mitigation strategies.

Enact

During this upcoming year, the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson hopes to enact several progressive laws, ordinances, and policies that will create a more conducive environment to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The CSC TF will play a role in recommending actions and in supporting the Village with ensuring compliance and enforcement of the new laws and policies.

Shade Structures Policy

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to adopt a Shade Structures Policy to ensure the concept is incorporated into future developments of Village-owned land.

Green Procurement Policy

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to review its procurement policy to ensure that it contains provisions that promote sustainable practices and purchasing choices to guide Village employees.

Anti-idling Law

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to adopt an anti-idling law to remind residents of the impact that idling cars have on the environment.

NY Stretch Energy Code

The Village plans to adopt the New York Stretch Energy Code due to the many benefits it offers residents and businesses. The Stretch Energy Code is a readily adoptable local energy code which is roughly 11% more efficient than 2020 ECCCNY. It prepares municipalities for future code cycles and is expressly authorized by Article 11 of NYS Energy Law. The Stretch Energy Code is based on proven technologies, systems, and construction techniques and integrates best practices from programs such as ENERGY STAR for homes. It saves energy and money as it results in the use of less energy and in reduced operating costs. Thus both new and renovated buildings benefit from long-term energy and cost savings. It increases property values and community attractiveness as more home/business owners and tenants look for green and energy efficient buildings and encourages Plan Review and Site Inspection by Third Parties (HERS Raters) and lessens the load on Code Officials. The code will support the Village in achieving energy/GHG reduction goals and will be a pivotal tool in supporting the municipality's energy/climate goals.

Open C-Pace Financing Law

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson plans to adopt the Open C-Pace law to provide financing to qualified property owners (commercial property owners and not-for-profits) for the installation of renewable energy systems and energy efficiency measures. The local law establishes a program that will allow the Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC), a local development corporation, acting on behalf of the Village to make funds available to qualified property owners that will be repaid through charges on the real properties benefited by such funds. This local law provides a method of implementing this arrangement, thereby allowing qualified property owners to receive low-cost, long-term dedicated financing for the installation of clean energy systems.

Green Building Code

The Village of Hastings' Green Building Code was adopted in 2013, the first such code in Westchester County. The Green Building Code ensures that new construction - and significant additions or renovations to existing buildings - will be done in accordance with rigorous standards of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. The Village plans to update its Green Building Code and

incorporate into it other relevant policies passed by the Village since the code was originally adopted. There is a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission that is pursuing this activity.

Innovative Actions

The Village plans to identify innovative ways to engineer solutions to lower its carbon footprint and reduce GHG emissions so as to mitigate climate change and/or to build resiliency to better adapt to climate change.

Evaluate

The Village intends to evaluate its success in implementing its climate change initiatives on an ongoing basis. The process will include discussion and evaluation of all projects and initiatives that have been undertaken to better understand which initiatives have been successful and why, and to understand why certain projects have languished.

Annual Review

The Village plans to use the CSC framework to document action steps and achievements. The initial goal is to submit documentation for Bronze CSC certification in January 2020 and to submit for Silver CSC certification after that. The Mayor and Board of Trustees plan to undertake an annual review of actions achieved to date. This annual review will include a review of strategies, goals, and accomplishments. Plans will be reviewed against achievements and existing plans will be updated if needed. The review will also be a celebration of effort and achievements.

Conclusion

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson has a long history of citizen-led environmental conservation efforts grounded in a solid baseline understanding of the impact of climate change. The formation of the Climate Smart Communities Task Force is an important step forward in focusing local efforts to reduce GHG emissions and build community resilience to climate change. The creation of the Public Engagement and Education Plan codifies those efforts and represents an important step in putting ideas into action.

The Public Engagement and Education Plan provides a practical guide which the CSC TF will follow during the coming year. The CSC TF plans to take a flexible, iterative approach, periodically reviewing accomplishments and updating the plan as needed. The knowledge built from outreach efforts will help inform how the Village communicates to specific groups about climate change, as well as how to integrate climate issues into existing programs and initiatives.

Because Hastings-on-Hudson is a small Village, a key component in implementing our plan will be to partner and collaborate with neighboring and regional organizations and governments, as well outreach specialists, who can help us engage a wider range of influencers and stakeholders. Through leveraging and sharing information, we hope to more effectively connect with our local community. Community buy-in will help us to identify innovative ideas for climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as to increase a greater overall sense of social cohesion. We also aim to reach out to specific stakeholder groups with targeted materials and to engage residents who may be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change so as to help them prepare for its effects.

Lastly, as part of developing an ongoing engagement program, the Village government plans to implement at least two public education, outreach, and/or engagement activities focused on climate change within the next year.