

GGBP Case Study Series

Low Carbon Development Planning and Analysis Toolkit in China

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Country: [China](#)

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Key words: [low-carbon development](#), [sub-national policy planning](#), [modelling](#), [low-carbon planning tools](#), [cooperation](#)

A technical toolkit for low carbon development planning and analysis is being developed and piloted through cooperation between Chinese and United States institutions. Its aim is to support China's provinces and cities in setting and meeting goals for growing their economies, reducing energy and greenhouse gas intensity and improving environmental impacts.

Context

China's 12th Five-Year Plan established national goals for low carbon development (LCD). Under the plan, each province and city is required to set its baselines and goals for economic growth, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and energy intensity reduction, consistent with national targets.

In practice, central government mandates do not guarantee that local governments will comply fully given the flexibility provisions and the widespread use of 'countermeasures' to

avoid unpalatable mandates. However, central government also provides training and capacity building support, and technical assistance to encourage implementation by provincial and local officials.

Such tools and approaches are usually developed through piloting in lead provinces before scaling up nationally.

Approach

In order to develop the toolkit for the assessment, establishment, and implementation of LCD goals at the provincial level, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Institute of Policy and Management of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS/IPM) are working with the Center for Climate Strategies (CCS) and the Global Environmental Institute. As the lead technical partner, CCS provides coaching, capacity building, and quality control, drawing on lessons learned from United States climate action planning. The toolkit is being piloted in Chongqing province as a basis for replication and scaling to other provinces during the period 2014–2016.

While this partnership is funded by private philanthropic organizations it has received formal government endorsements from the U.S. Department of State and China's NDRC through an EcoPartnership Award.

The major choices made by partners include:

1. Focus on technique transfer ('how to') as the missing link for China's advancement of climate change mitigation and LCD;
2. Design a process that supports self-determination by China on the adaptation of a United States based, subnational template;
3. Use technical tools to support policy selection, design, evaluation, and monitoring;
4. Create tools for public collaboration and capacity building as opposed to closed, proprietary systems that may inhibit scaling and expansion;
5. Focus policy development at the subnational level in a manner that translates national goals to the local level and can scale local efforts to the national level.

At the heart of the toolkit is a state-of-the-art modeling system, which allows direct and indirect benefits and costs to be assessed. It is designed to support program-level decisions in each sector as they are applied to government programs, such as industrial development, economic shift, energy shift, urbanization, and modernization of agriculture.

While the process will provide significant new information to governmental executives and managers, China's leadership maintains that these data should not be shared with the public or foreign organizations. As a result, the decision process used for LCD does not include the important elements of openness and inclusion found in green growth processes elsewhere.

Nonetheless, the LCD system does include a stepwise, fact-based system for decisions involving local civil servants and technical institutes, along with national government and institutes. The data frameworks and policy and technical decisions within the LCD system are structured for multi-party review and collaboration, so the transition toward expanded collaboration is possible. This may be driven by international and domestic needs for transparency, and the recognition by policymakers in China that an expert group process is critical for fully reliable feasibility analysis. Hence, local experts and interests could ultimately be invited into this LCD planning system.

Outcomes

The Chongqing LCD pilot along with the toolkit was completed in 2014, and national scale-up is planned. This will involve a training and curriculum program with the Chinese Academy of Governance (CAG) designed to train civil

servant executives and managers at the subnational level, followed by commitments for LCD planning in each jurisdiction.

While it is too soon to know if the project will result in direct impacts from better provincial planning, it has affected thinking among Chinese policymakers at the national and provincial levels in several key areas:

- ‘Triple win’ policy design is possible, economic trade-offs are not inevitable, and future economic growth will depend on lower energy and resource footprints;
- Newly measured baselines show that China’s emission trajectories may be worse than thought;
- Existing air quality actions may not be sufficient in engineering the energy and industrial shifts needed to set strong greenhouse gas reduction goals;
- Many new options exist to move ahead in each sector for stronger action.

Lessons

Legitimacy: Provincial officials in China are directed under national policy (the 12th Five-Year Plan) to set and achieve locally specific targets in each province for greenhouse gas emission reductions, economic growth, and energy intensity reduction that are consistent with the national framework and metrics. They, in turn, have welcomed third-party assistance and partnerships toward capacity building and technique development.

Credibility: The national directives are manifested in a new official paradigm, LCD, that is designed to meet green growth goals through a new system of planning and analysis developed cooperatively with national and international expertise involving several partners.

Efficiency: This initiative is supported formally by national agencies in the United States and China but currently without government funding. Partnership and collaboration with non-governmental organizations is supported at this time by private foundations, and involves CAS/IPM, CAG, and provincial technical institutions. This LCD collaboration model, while involving many parties, has been efficient in creating a new template and early documentation of results, but the bilateral teams have widely different experience levels (high in the United States, low in China) and this creates a mismatch and inefficiency.

It has become clear that smart and collaborative policy planning and analysis can identify actions that are good for green growth, that is, those that simultaneously deliver significant and sustainable economic, energy, and environmental benefits in China. But capacity building needs to be matched with a commitment to deliver success. This is a government leadership issue.

Further Information

Center for Climate Strategies:
http://www.climatestrategies.us/international_actions/international_actions/view/2

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