



**Northern Illinois
University**

**Impacting Illinois Communities through
Sustainability Policy Engagement**

Board of Trustees

Research and Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee

August 24, 2023

Agenda



What is sustainability policy?

What is policy engagement?

Success stories

- **NSF Advancing Smart Logistics**
- **IDNR Land and Water Conservation**

Looking to the future

Background



Director, Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability, and Energy (ESE) and Environmental Studies major

Faculty Associate, NICCS

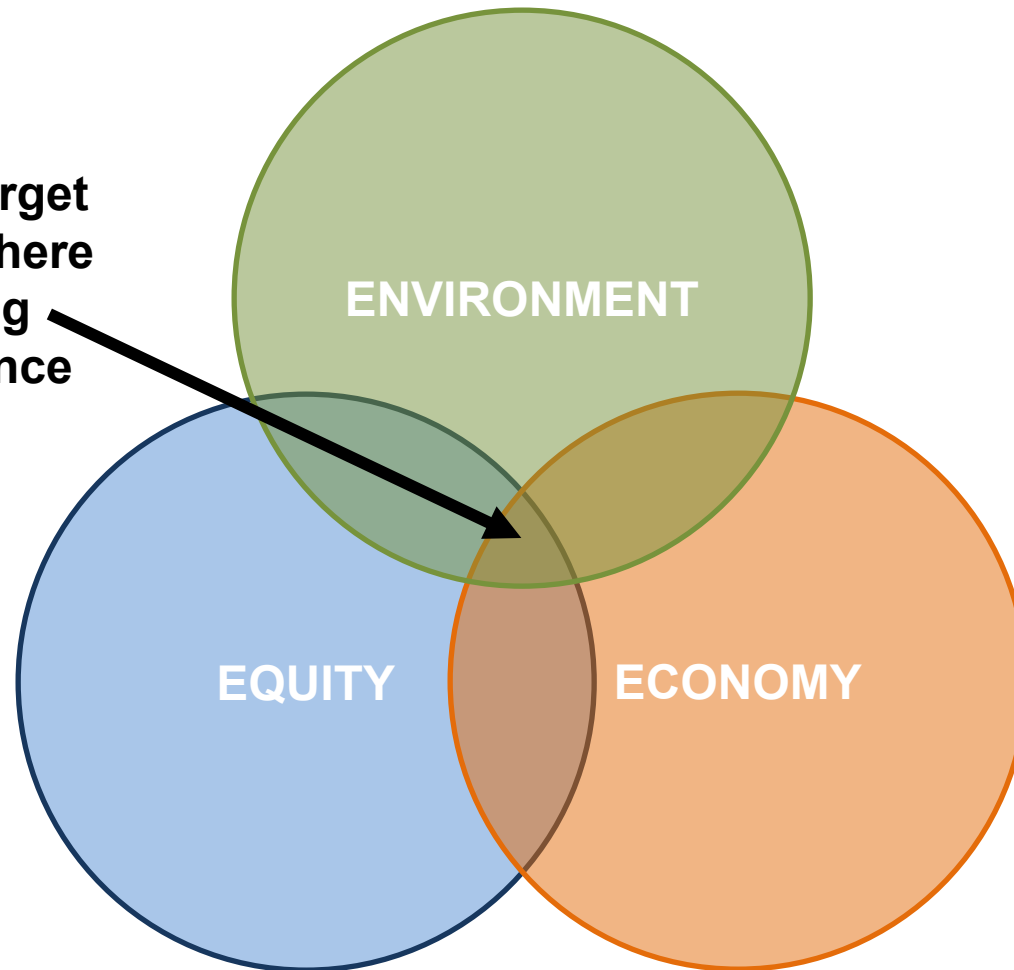
Associate Professor, Public Administration

Illinois Innovation Network,
Chair, Research and Collaboration Working Committee

What is sustainability policy?



Policies that target at least one sphere while promoting long-term balance with others



What is sustainability policy?

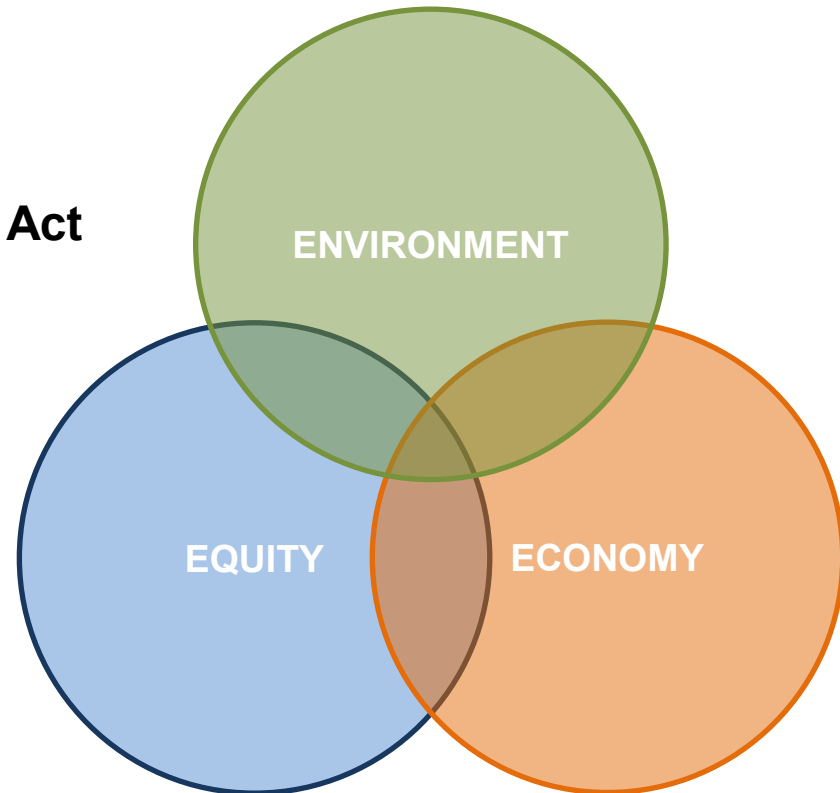


Examples:

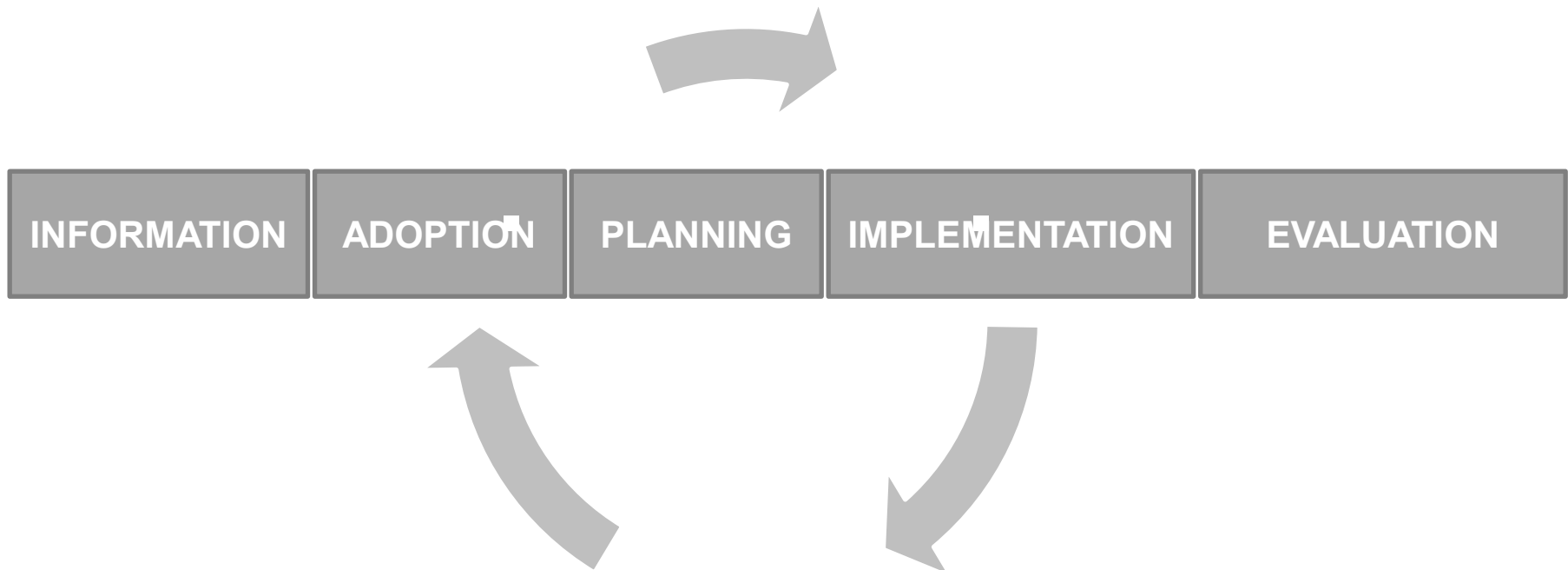
Municipal Climate Action Plans

Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act

U.S. Inflation Reduction Act



What is policy engagement?



Opportunities for engagement at each stage in the policy process with **24 state agencies and over 5,000 units of local government statewide engaged in sustainability**

What is policy engagement?



INFORMATION

ADOPTION

PLANNING

IMPLEMENTATION

EVALUATION

Policy engagement supports multiple NIU goals:

Goal 2B: Continue to Make our Student Experience More Engaging

Goal 3A: Transdisciplinary Scholarship and Curricular Innovation

Goal 3B: Enhance the Graduate Student Experience

Goal 5A: Advance NICCS and Sustainability Initiatives

Goal 5B: Strengthen Infrastructure for Engagement

Success story: NSF Advancing Smart Logistics



Sponsor:

National Science Foundation Directorate for
Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships
(TIPS)

Award:

Regional Innovation Engines Development
Planning Award for **\$1 million**



Success story: NSF Advancing Smart Logistics



Sponsor:

National Science Foundation (TIPS)

Award:

Regional Innovation Engines \$1 million



Objectives:

Transforming the state's transportation logistics system through five core strengths:

- Interdisciplinary applied research
- Business incubation and entrepreneurship
- **Adaptive lifelong and P -20 Learning**
- **Cross -sectoral inclusive economic development**
- **Deep community engagement**

Success story: NSF Advancing Smart Logistics



44 NSF Engines Development Awards

Hover over each Engine icon to see the details.



Success story: NSF Advancing Smart Logistics



Collaborative effort within and beyond NIU

- Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability, and Energy
- Center for Governmental Studies
- Center for P -20 Engagement
- Undocumented Student Resource Center



Success story: NSF Advancing Smart Logistics



Student success link

- Opportunities for degree and non -degree program development aligned with sustainable growth
- Research experiences for undergraduate and graduate students
- Visibility and impact in communities NIU students call home.

Sustainability Policy link

Deep engagement with local communities and organizations to develop and change policies to improve job access for people from underserved communities.

Success story: IDNR Land & Water Conservation



Sponsor:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Awards:

\$845,000 for grant review support (FY22)

\$1,000,000 for statewide comprehensive planning and development of a support GIS for state decision -making (FY23 -FY25)



Illinois
Department of
**Natural
Resources**

Success story: IDNR Land & Water Conservation



Sponsor:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Award:

Student -engaged planning and data support, \$1,845,000 total



Illinois
Department of
**Natural
Resources**

Objectives:

- Distribute \$60 million to acquisition and development of parklands statewide, with \$15 million for distressed communities
- Assist with Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Develop a statewide Parks GIS
- Provide research fellowships to team of 20 graduate and undergraduate students (over \$300,000 in direct student support)
- Develop mentoring and career pathways into state policy work

Success story: IDNR Land & Water Conservation



Student success link

- Funding support through meaningful research fellowships
- Building network relationships with state and federal officials
- Seeing impact from their work in their own communities

Sustainability Policy link

Environmental conservation and gains in economic development and public health from access to park amenities, especially in economically distressed communities

Looking to the future



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

External funding opportunities that require equitable public sector engagement and collaboration are increasing

- *Emphasis on transdisciplinary, use-inspired, translational research*
- *Focus on impacts for systematically under-resourced and disadvantaged communities*

Looking to the future

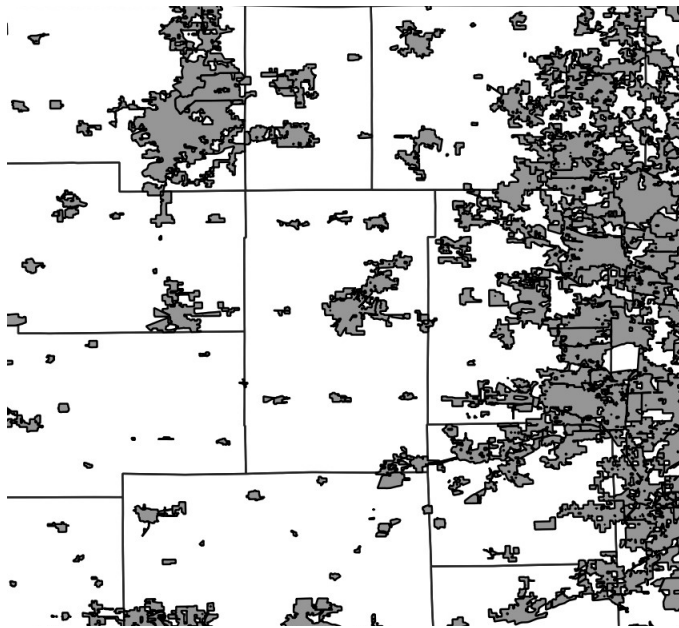


Many state agencies lost core policy capacity due to the pandemic

- *Need for contracted support in **planning and implementation***
- *New openness to **graduate and undergraduate student work***



Looking to the future



Local governments need capacity in sustainability policy

- *Current contract with Village of Wilmette to complete a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory to support Climate Action Planning (interest from City of Oregon and Village of Northbrook)*
- *Few governments with standalone Sustainability Plan or dedicated Sustainability Manager / Coordinator to build grant-seeking, implementation, and external collaboration capacity*

Looking to the future



Students want to learn about how they can harness the power of government

- *Growth in undergraduate students in the **Environmental Policy and Law** emphasis in Environmental Studies*
- *Developing **Environmental Policy and Management specialization** in the Public Administration graduate program*





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