

## PE5 Action: Community Repair

4 Points

### A. Why is this action important?

Community Repair programs provide the opportunity for residents to bring household items to a local event to be repaired at no charge with skilled volunteers who are also their neighbors. These events are often known as Repair Cafes or Fixit Clinics. Such events help the community to transition away from today's throwaway economy, where broken items and damaged clothing are quickly discarded and sent to landfills. Community Repair programs foster a sense of community engagement, creativity, and fun as repair coaches and community members collaborate to extend the useful life of things they own. These events also facilitate the transfer of knowledge between individuals and teaches the public that repair is a viable alternative to throwing away products. Ultimately, this strategy keeps many useful items out of landfills, which are quickly filling up, and decreases greenhouse gas emissions. Around the world, there are more than 2,300 Repair Cafes. In 2019, according to [repaircafe.org](http://repaircafe.org), these cafes repaired more than 430,000 products, resulting in an estimated 22.8 million pounds in avoided carbon dioxide emissions.

### B. How to implement this action

To obtain points for this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action, local governments can either begin a new community repair initiative or participate in an existing repair initiative in the area. All Community repair programs share the following two attributes: Repairs are free to the public and the events are not a drop-off repair service; instead they are interactive, in-person gatherings that foster communication and relationship-building between participants.

When starting a new event, the municipality must first obtain a place to host the gathering. Generally the events are held for about four hours on a weekend, usually in a community space such as a library, school, town hall, community center, church, or synagogue. These meeting places should have available tables to serve as work stations. If a Repair Cafe, or the like, already exists in the community, the local government can help provide a larger or more suitable space to hold the event if necessary.

When starting a new Community Repair program, organizers must enroll a team of volunteers and develop a framework for supporting a series of events and defining its long-term goals. An important initial step is to find and invite volunteers to attend gatherings and provide repairs at no charge. These volunteers are known as repair coaches to indicate that they there to encourage the engagement and learning of the person who brings them an item. Repair coaches can be professionals, retirees, or hobbyists; they can be found through local clubs, word of mouth, online searches, or library reference sections. Volunteers will also be needed to assist with set up and signing in visitors. Connecting with high schools and scout troops are potential ways to find students that are looking for volunteer hours.

Repair coaches and other volunteers should also coordinate amongst themselves and with local donors to provide light refreshments for the gathering; providing snacks and coffee/tea supports the sociable, cafe-like experience. See Section C below for more details about additional resource needs.

For either an existing or a new repair initiative, flyers and press releases should be sent out to help publicize the event, with emphasis on the specialties of the repair coaches attending. The local government should encourage participation by announcing the event on their municipal website and social media platforms.

A starter kit with all relevant materials is available from the [Repair Café International Foundation](http://RepairCafeInternationalFoundation.org) for a one-time donation of about \$58. Other advice and support can be found through the [repaircafeusa.org](http://repaircafeusa.org) or [fixitclinic.org](http://fixitclinic.org) websites.

### **C. Time frame, project costs, and resource needs**

Repair events are typically hosted by a community every other month or every third month (six or four events/year), but for the purposes of this CSC action, the minimum requirement is two events within a given calendar year. Repair coaches and organizers are all volunteer, so costs to host a repair event should be minimal. Donation jars to cover the cost of pizza for the volunteers is encouraged. Repair coaches bring a selection of their own tools to conduct the repairs. In addition, organizers tend to provide an array of common repair items such as glue and cleaners and other incidentals. The cost of repair materials and refreshments can be covered by donations or out-of-pocket purchases. Organizers are also responsible for creating a safe and functional workspace in which they can complete repairs with ease. In addition, a sign-in book with legal disclaimers is essential. It is necessary for visitors to acknowledge that repair coaches are not liable for any damage to the item and that they cannot guarantee a fix. Templates for these liability forms, as well as graphic templates for posters and signs are available in the starter kit from the [Repair Café International Foundation](#).

### **D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this?**

This action is applicable to any local government. These activities may be organized by a variety of departments or committees, such as the CSC task force, the department of public works or recycling division, or a sustainability committee. Youth involvement is encouraged.

### **E. How to obtain points for this action**

Four points are available for local governments that have hosted or facilitated at least two Community Repair events within a given calendar year, with plans in place to continue the activity, consistent with the guidelines above.

### **F. What to submit**

Submit documentation that includes the date, time, and location for at least two Community Repair events that were held within a given calendar year, ideally in the past year (pending safety guidelines for large, in-person gatherings).

Documentation of the events should include flyers for the events and/or photographs, where available. To help track results, provide attendee sign-in sheets that include the number of items that were brought in for repairs. Include information about the local Community Repair team and its goals to show a commitment to continue the program long-term.

Applicants must also submit information on the role played by the local government. This can consist of a copy of the announcement on the municipal website and/or a description of the government's assistance in providing a rent-free meeting place, such as a town hall.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

### **G. Links to additional resources or best practices**

[Repair Café Foundation](#)

[Hudson Valley Repair Cafe](#)

[Repair Revolution: How Fixers Are Transforming Our Throwaway Culture \(book\)](#)

[Toronto, CA Repair Cafe](#)

### **H. Recertification requirements**

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.