



# Making the Greenest Region Compact Easier for Municipal Leaders

Usability Review and Student  
Recommendations



# NIU Presentation Roadmap

1. Project Overview and Review Approach
2. Findings and Analysis
3. Themes and Framework Recommendations
4. Examples, Next Steps, and Discussion

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- **Project Overview and Review Approach**

# ENVS 497 Capstone: Reviewing the Greenest Region Compact (GRC) for Usability and Implementation



## Real-World Sustainability Collaboration

- ENVS 497 Capstone students partnered with MMC to address regional sustainability challenges.



## Comprehensive GRC Review

- Focused on the Greenest Region Compact's **usability, relevance, and clarity** for municipal leaders.
- Evaluated goals, strategies, objectives, and supporting resources for current implementation needs.



## Action-Oriented Recommendations

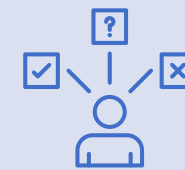
- Assessed whether items should be **kept, updated, merged, deleted, or moved** to supporting materials.

# Review Questions Used by Students



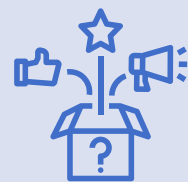
## Assessing Relevance

- Reviewed if each GRC item is still **accurate** and fits current municipal needs.



## Identifying Needed Updates

- Flagged items requiring clearer language, new resources, or updated examples.



## Spotting Outdated or Duplicate Content

- Highlighted items that are **outdated** or overlap with others for possible removal or merging.



## Enhancing Implementation Support

- Recommended ways to better support reporting, communication, and practical use.

# How Recommendations Were Organized

## Five Recommendation Categories

### Keep

- Still relevant and useful

### Update

- Still useful, but needs clearer wording or updated resources

### Merge

- Overlaps with another item and could be combined

### Delete

- Outdated, duplicative, or no longer useful in the core framework

### Move to Supporting Materials

- Useful detail that may work better in an appendix, checklist, example bank, or implementation guide



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- **Findings and Analysis**

# Overall Findings: 421 Items Reviewed



## Comprehensive Review Process

- Students evaluated **421 items** across the Greenest Region Compact.
- Each item assessed for relevance, clarity, and current implementation needs.



## Key Recommendation Outcomes

- **162 items recommended to keep**, reflecting strong foundational value.
- **125 items recommended for update**, primarily to improve clarity and relevance.
- **134 items recommended to merge, delete, or move**, helping streamline usability.



## Framework Strength & Opportunity

- Majority of content remains valuable; focus is on making the GRC clearer and more actionable for municipalities.

# What the Findings Tell Us



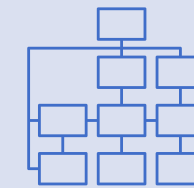
## Strong Foundation Remains

Most GRC items are still relevant and provide a solid base for municipal sustainability efforts.



## Need for Strategic Refresh

Many strategies require updated language, resources, and examples to reflect current technology, policy, funding, and municipal practice.



## Opportunity for Clearer Structure

Some content could be reorganized into an appendix or implementation guide for easier use and reference.

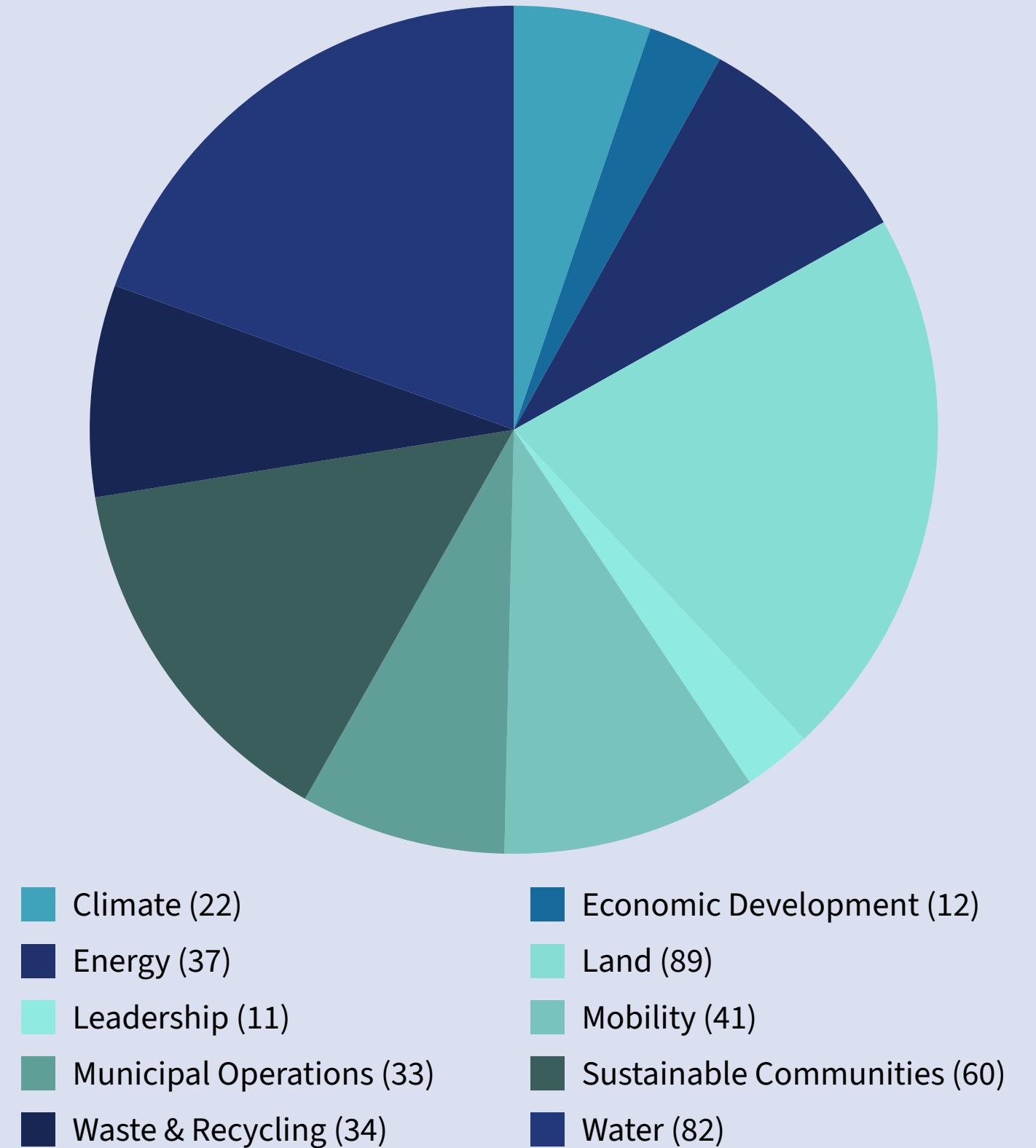
# Where the Review Was Most Concentrated

## Review Focus by Topic Area

- Largest review efforts centered on Land, Water, and Sustainable Communities.

## More Focused Categories

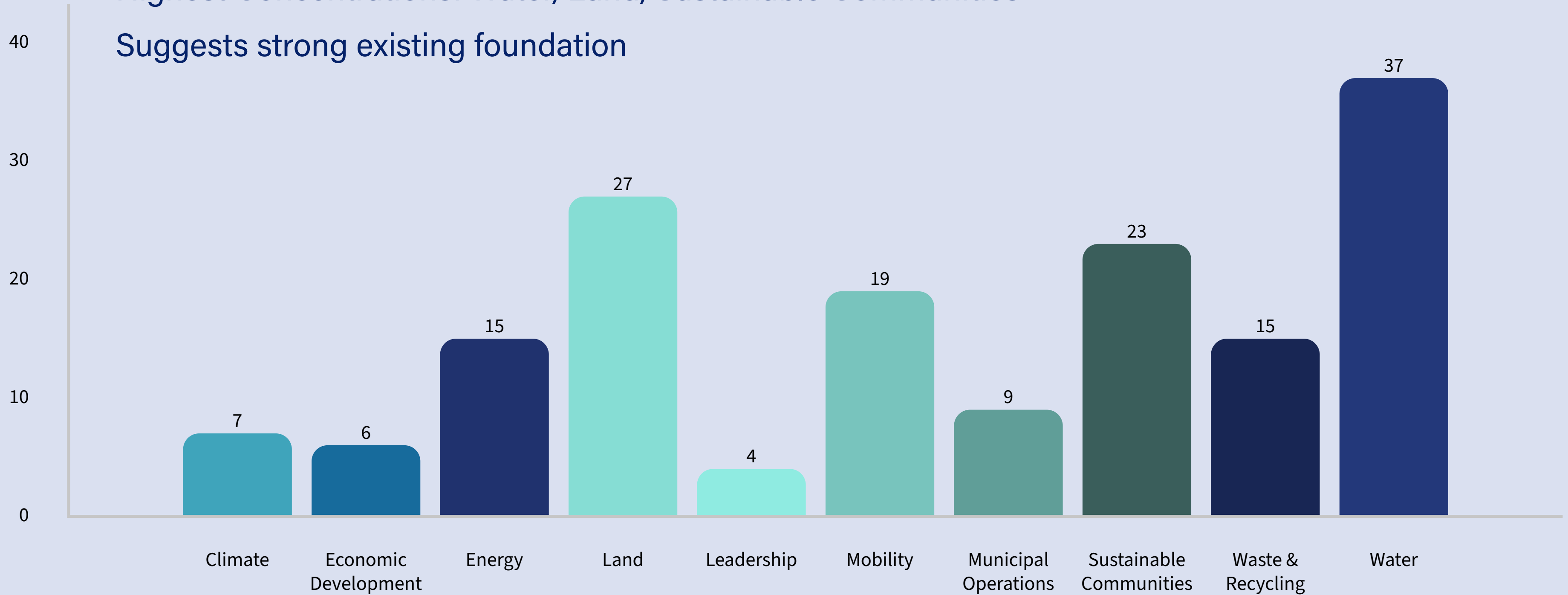
- Topics like Leadership and Economic Development had fewer items, meaning they may need a more focused review rather than a large-scale restructuring.



# Keep: 162

Highest Concentrations: Water, Land, Sustainable Communities

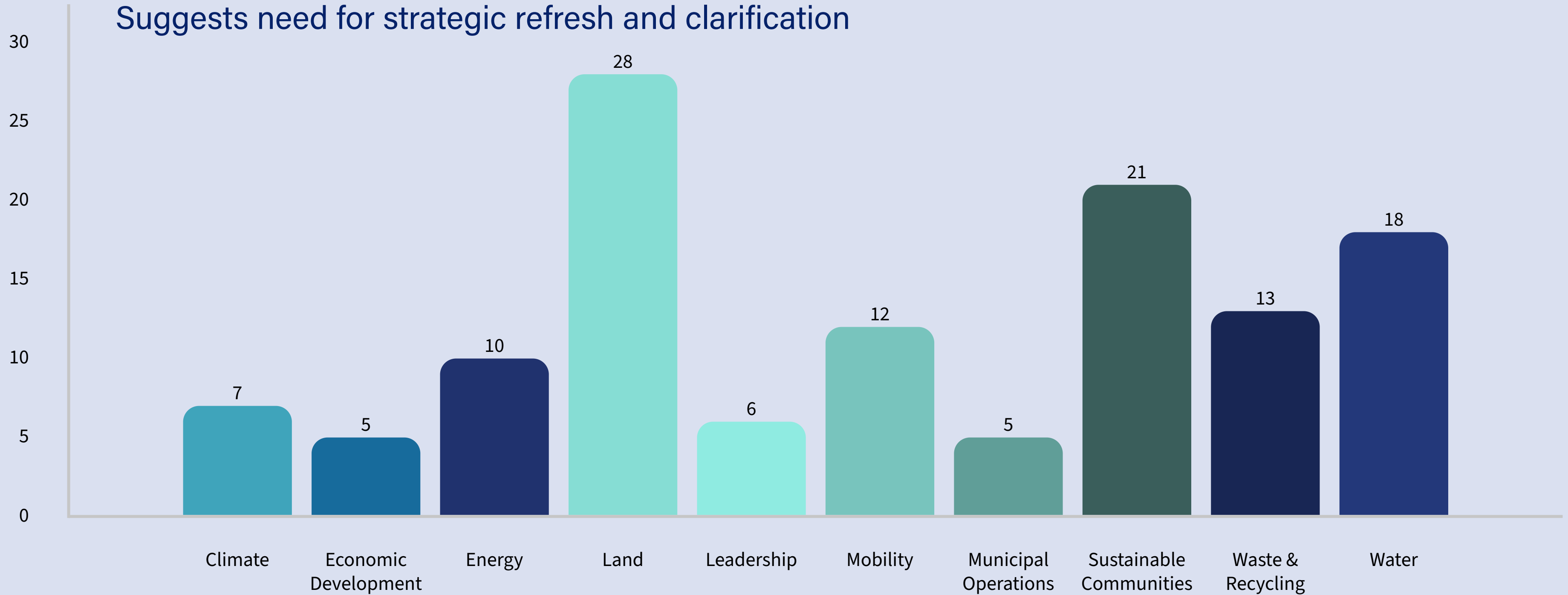
Suggests strong existing foundation



# Update: 125

Highest Concentrations: Land, Sustainable Communities, Water

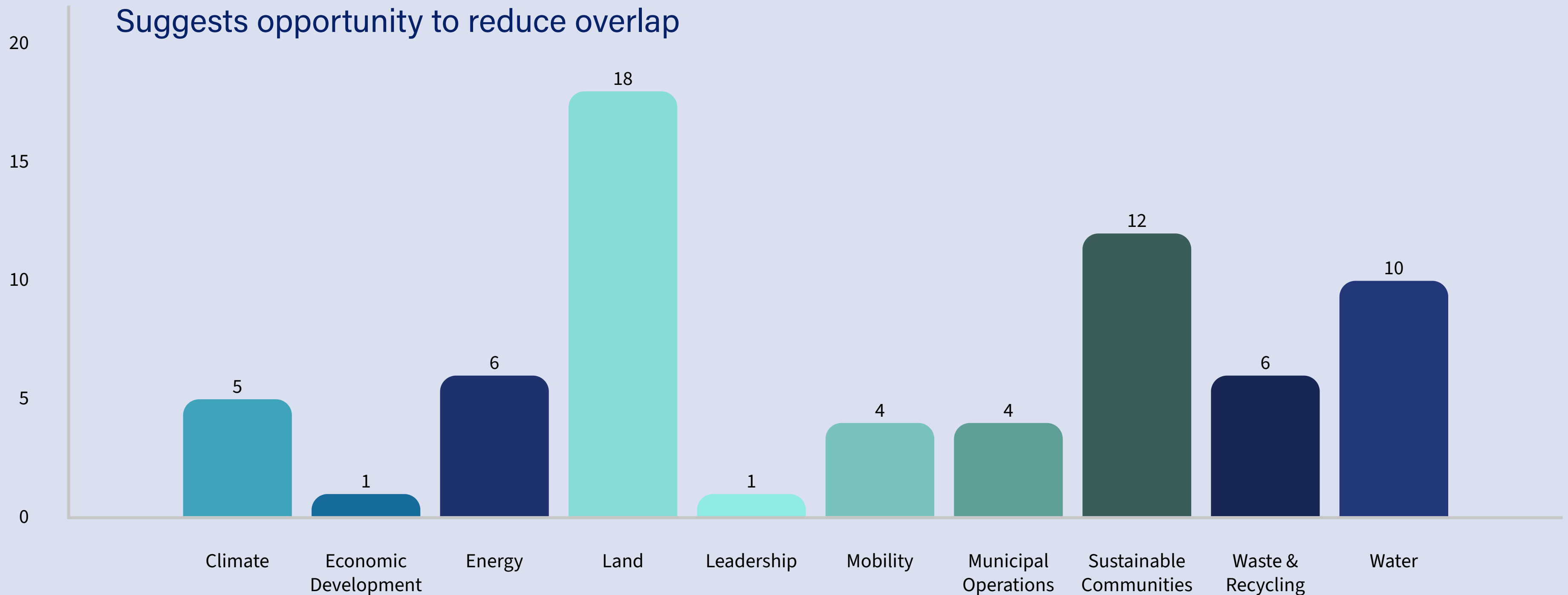
Suggests need for strategic refresh and clarification



# Merge & Delete: 67

Highest Concentrations: Land, Sustainable Communities, Water

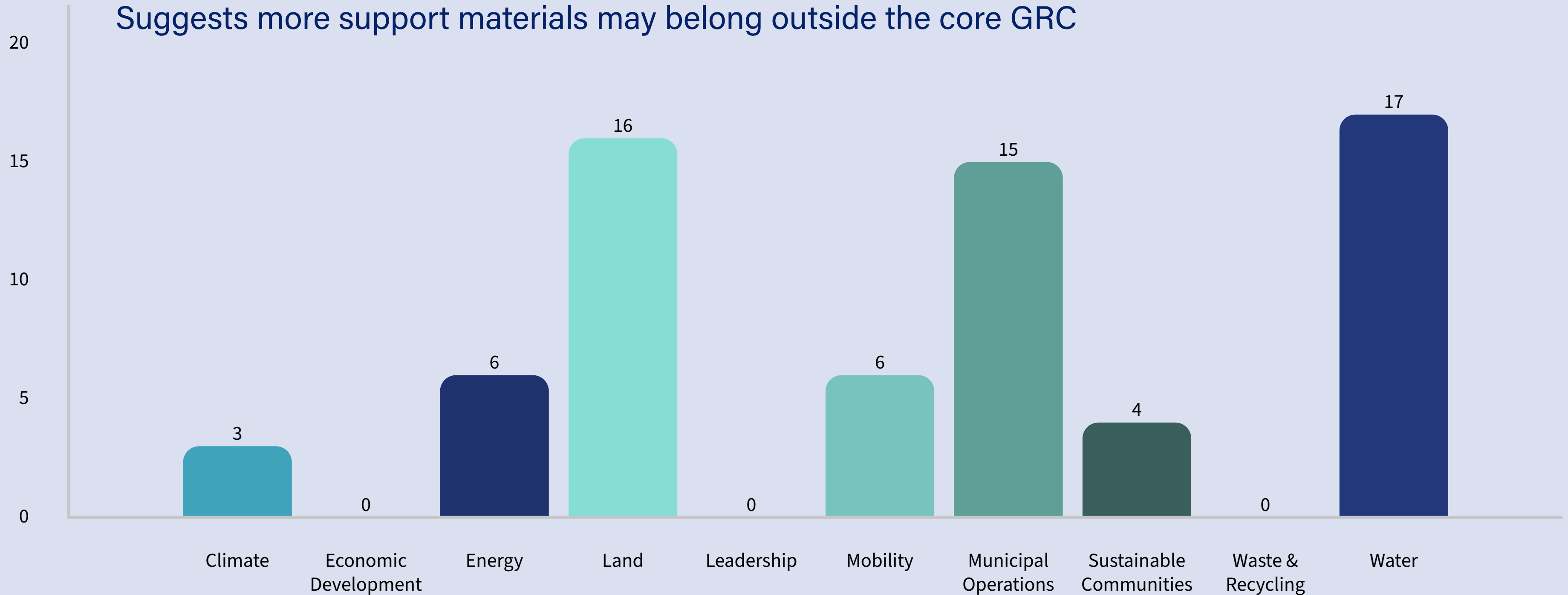
Suggests opportunity to reduce overlap



# Move to Supporting Materials: 67

Highest Concentrations: Water, Land, Municipal Operations

Suggests more support materials may belong outside the core GRC



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- **Themes and Framework  
Recommendations**

# Theme 1: Clearer Language



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## Simplify GRC Language

- Use clear, direct wording to support **municipal users who may be newer to sustainability terminology**



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## Clarify Technical Terms

- Define or explain **vague and technical terms** for easier understanding.



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## Provide Actionable Examples

- Include examples when using terms like appropriate, achieve, encourage to guide implementation.



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## Streamline Item Structure

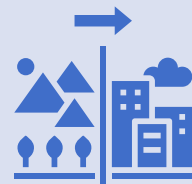
- Focus on strategies as the action layer to more clearly identify municipal action steps.

# Theme 2: Municipal, Community, or Regional Action?



## Clarifying Responsibility

- Strategies vary in whether they target **municipal operations**, community-wide efforts, or regional partnerships.



## Action Types Matter

- Identifying if actions are **policy, program, infrastructure, education, or planning** focused helps municipalities understand their role.



## Avoiding Confusion

- Clear distinctions between municipal and community strategies make implementation easier and more effective.

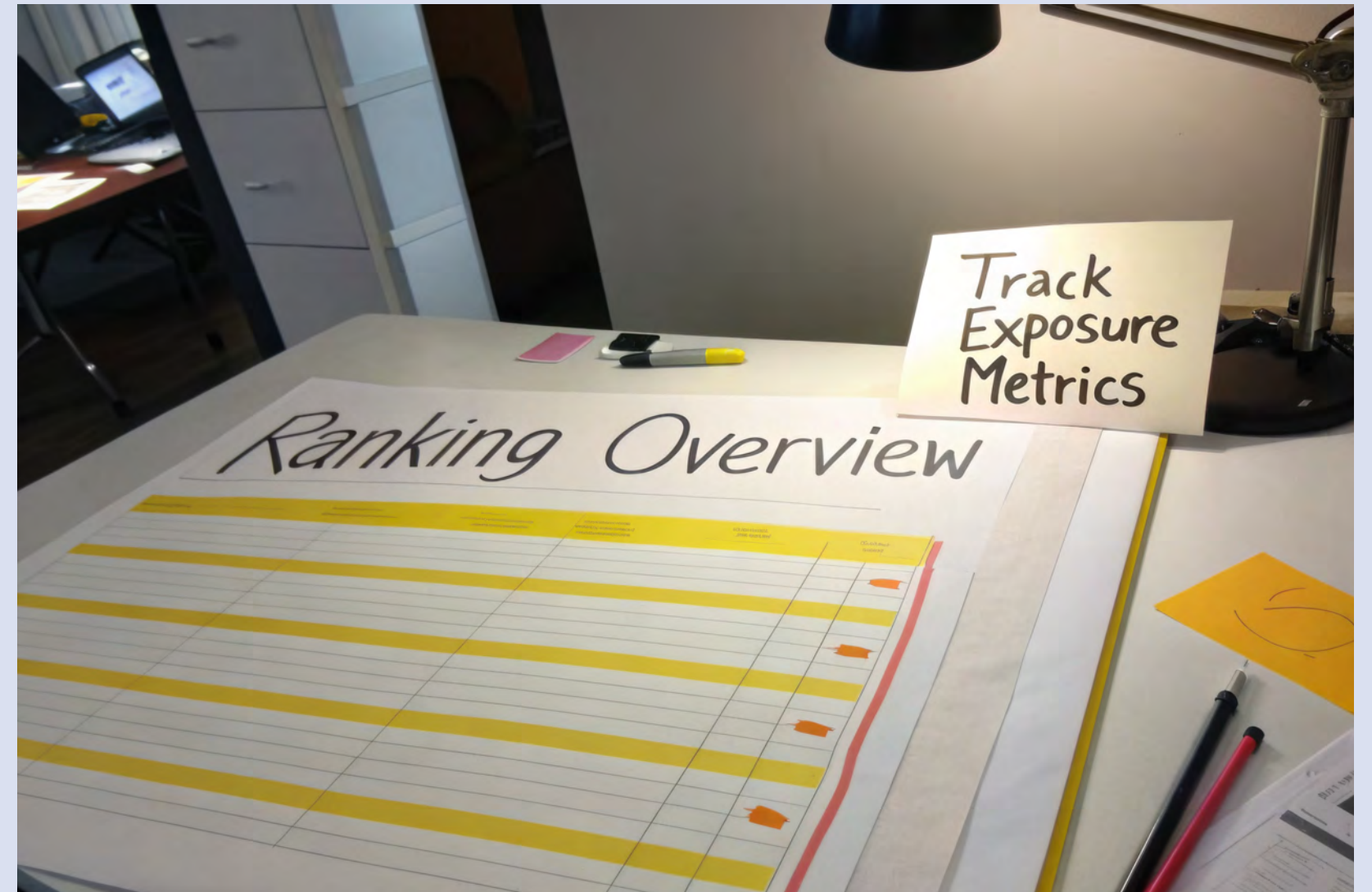
# Theme 3: Make Progress Easier to Track

## Clarifying Action Types

- Define whether actions are **one-time**, **annual/semi-regular**, or **milestone-based** for easier tracking
- Distinguish between **policy**, **program**, and **infrastructure** steps

## Enhancing Measurability

- Identify which actions are **measurable** and which are qualitative
- Tag items as **quick wins** or longer-term steps to support progress reporting



# Possible Updated Framework Structure



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## Core GRC

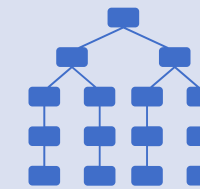
- Goal area
- Strategy
- Plain-language description
- Primary action type



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## Tags / Crosswalks

- Municipal, community, or regional
- One-time, recurring, or ongoing
- Measurable or qualitative
- Lead, Act, Encourage
- CAP alignment



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## Supporting Materials

- Examples
- Case studies
- Definitions
- Resource links
- Model ordinances
- Quick wins and checklists

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- **Examples, Next Steps,  
and Discussion**

# Examples of How Recommendations Could Be Applied

Goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Current	Action	Recommendation
C1: Establish a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction target	Update	C1: Establish a GHG emission reduction target for municipal operations
C1a: >Utilize US EPA's Local Climate Action Framework to plan and evaluate climate strategies	Merge / Move	Remove
C2: Measure and monitor GHG emissions	Merge with C2a	Remove
C2a: >Measure and monitor GHG from municipal operations	Keep	C2: Measure and monitor GHG from municipal operations
C2b: >Measure and monitor GHG community wide	Keep	C3: Measure and monitor GHG community wide
C+3: +Verify and report climate action to the Carbon Climate Registry	Delete / Move	Remove
C+4: +Participate in carbon offset program	Keep	C4: Participate in carbon offset program
C+5: +Commit to the Compact of Mayors	Move	Remove

# Suggested Next Steps



## Review and Refine Recommendations

- Examine student-coded spreadsheet to validate **Keep, Update, Merge, Delete, Move to resources** categories



## Clarify Core vs. Supporting Materials

- Determine which items belong in the main GRC and which should move to an appendix or resource guide



## Prioritize Key Content Updates

- Focus on areas where content or context has changed most significantly



## Enhance Usability and Tracking

- Add tags for action type, measurability, frequency, and CAP alignment.
- Gather municipal feedback to test clarity and usability.
- Increase flexibility by broadening how strategies can be accomplished, rather than adding more strategies.

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**Thank you.**