Engaging Communities for Climate Action: From Research, to Theory, to Practice

Local Government Commission
Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Dan Barry -- ecoAmerica
ecoAmerica.org

Mission: Build a critical mass of institutional leadership, public support, and political will for definitive climate solutions in the United States.

● Provide programs + resources
● Elevate visible leadership
● Shift the national narrative
● Build collective impact

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The Public and Climate Change

Estimated % of adults who think global warming is happening, 2014

Display model output: Global warming is happening
% Adults who think humans are causing the Earth to warm

Credit: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication
% Adults who think there are smart ways to fix global warming

Credit: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication
% Adults who talk about global warming...

Credit: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication
Motivated Avoidance

Fear
Confirmation bias
Techno optimism
Conflict avoidance
Competing priorities
Social norms
Fatalism & resignation
Evolution of Climate Messaging

V1
Armageddon
Global Warming

V2
Social Benefits
Opportunity

V3
Personal Relevance
Family and Freedom
www.ecoAmerica.org/Research
Methodology

1. meta analysis
2. focus groups
3. online dial tests
4. national phone survey

Oversampled African Americans. Hispanic/Latinos; health, faith, business, higher ed; climate advocates.
Why Values?

Climate >>> Weather

Values >>> Opinions

Frames >>> Messages
Why Values?

Our cores values are established early, and don’t change much -- or quickly

People make choices based upon their core personal values

Large scale social change requires changes in people’s core personal values
Top Climate Values Insights

- People Follow Their “Tribes”
- My Family First
- Won’t Abandon the Dream
- Benefits Are Essential for Action
- Climate Action Is Elite and Alienating
Effective Climate Engagement, Messaging, and Messengers

- Explore importance of stakeholder mapping and engagement
- Learn 15-step process for message development
Why Engage the Community?

Community engagement is how community institutions, leaders, and individuals **build ongoing, permanent relationships** for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the **benefit of a community**.

Community engagement is both a process and an outcome.
Why Engage the Community?

Programs with high levels of community engagement and control result in greater participation in community improvement activities.

Engagement builds “social capital” -- social ties, networks, and support associated with better community progress and well-being.

Participatory decision-making can reveal and mobilize community assets, strengths, and resources that would have been otherwise overlooked.
How To Engage the Community?

- Inform: Low level of public engagement
- Consult
- Involve: Mid level of public engagement
- Collaborate
- Empower: High level of public engagement
How To Engage the Community?

- Make it easy
- Demonstrate your leadership
- Interact with the community
- Welcome and empower new voices
- Identify and support other leaders
- Engage with popular existing communities
- Showcase and promote “Little L” leaders
- Reward contributions and contributors
- Make it public – share and post the results
Steps for Engaging the Community

- **Assess** – evaluate your engagement needs, goals, and capacity
- **Define** – what is success? Is “good enough” good enough?
- **Map** – who lives in your community: what are their needs?
- **Identify** – community institutions and leaders that can help
- **Recruit** – secure firm commitments from visible leaders
- **Engage** – provide opportunity, context, content, support, aid
- **Reward** – keep leaders and citizens with you through rewards
- **Track** – collect data and success stories to show your progress
- **Share** – your successes will inspire others and lead to more
- **Repeat** – good engagement is a process, not a goal – **REPEAT**
Tips to Engage the Public on Climate Change

1. **Acknowledge** emotion
2. **Focus on** local
3. **Emphasize** solutions & co-benefits
Tips to Prepare & Strengthen Communities

1. **Strengthen social networks**
2. **Work across groups**
3. **Incorporate solutions into plans**
Stakeholder Mapping
## Stakeholder Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely Support</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Anticipated Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Likely Support" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Neutral" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Anticipated Opposition" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Likely Support" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Neutral" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Anticipated Opposition" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Likely Support" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Neutral" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Anticipated Opposition" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15 Steps for Effective Communications

Build Rapport
1. Start with people, stay with people
2. Connect on common values
3. Acknowledge ambivalence
4. Make it real

Inspire & Empower
5. Emphasize solutions
6. Inspire and empower
7. Focus on personal benefit
8. End with your “ask”
9. Sequence matters
10. Describe, don’t label

Strengthen Message
11. Have at least one powerful fact from a trusted messenger
12. Ditch doom and gloom
13. Use stories to strengthen engagement
14. Stay above the fray
15. Message discipline is critical
1. Start with people, stay with people

• Show your audience you care about them
• Start from their perspective using tangible, relevant concerns
• Move from people to climate
2. Connect on common values

• Understand your audience’s priorities and concerns
• Common values are powerful motivators
• Build rapport
3. Acknowledge ambivalence

- People have different levels of climate concern
- Respect different perspectives
- “Some of us are more worried about climate change than others...”
4. Make it real

- Focus on local realities people can see with their own eyes
- Discuss the realities, don’t argue the science
- Use one or two examples, then pivot quickly to solutions
5. **Emphasize solutions**

- Highlight the co-benefits of solutions, like health and community, using examples that show real solutions are already here

- Avoid messages of sacrifice
6. Inspire & empower

• Focus on hope and opportunity
• We can make a difference, and America can lead on climate
7. Focus on personal benefits

Pocketbooks  Health  Community
8. End with your ask

- Turn awareness into action
- Make asks accessible, and provide one or two ideas
9. **Sequence matters – follow these in order!**

1. Start with people, stay with people
2. Connect on common values
3. Acknowledge ambivalence
4. Make it real
5. Emphasize solutions
6. Inspire and empower
7. Focus on personal benefit
8. End with your “ask”
9. Sequence matters
10. Describe, don’t label
11. Have at least one powerful fact from a trusted messenger
12. Ditch doom and gloom
13. Use stories to strengthen engagement
14. Stay above the fray
15. Message discipline is critical
10. Describe don’t label

- Use their language, not yours
- Jargon and labels confuse people
- Avoid terms like mitigation or atmospheric carbon dioxide
www.ecoamerica.org/research
11. Have at least one powerful fact from a trusted messenger
   • Trusted messengers lend credibility

12. Ditch doom & gloom
   • Dire messages cause fatalism

13. Use stories to strengthen engagement
   • Stories enhance empathy and rapport

14. Stay above the fray
   • Don’t get sidetracked by details or arguments

15. Message discipline is critical
   • Stay on your talking points
Basic Communications Skills
Basic Communications Skills

• Public speaking best practices

• Understand how “frames” can work for and against us

• Craft and use a core message

• Learn to use values language & pass “The In-Law Test”

• Repeat, repeat, repeat (message discipline)
Key Takeaways

- Speak **slowly**, in plain language. No jargon
- Have a clear 10-second message. Repeat it often
- Be concise. Less is more
- Only use notes if appropriate (radio, phone interviews)
- Pivot! Never restate a negative question
- Remember: You control the speech, or interview
- Be friendly, polite & professional
Tough Interview Questions

If you don’t know the answer...
  ● It’s ok to say “I don’t know”

*Never restate a negative frame* or question – pivot!

Know when AND how to pivot
  ● What we’re really talking about here is...
  ● The truth is...
  ● Let’s look at the facts...
  ● I don’t know about that, but what I can tell you is...
Framing

The “Freedom Frame” Working Against Us

- Government regulation of fossil fuels
- Government picking winners and losers
Framing

The “Freedom Frame”
Working For Us

- Right to clean air & water
- Democratization of clean energy, or transportation
A core message...

- Communicates your most important idea or message in one or two sentences
- Uses accessible, values-based language
- Informs the rest of your communications
- The is your “elevator pitch”
“The In-Law Test”

● Simple, clear, values language

● Concrete examples better than abstractions

● No jargon! Avoid technical terms & acronyms
“The In-Law Test”

“Decarbonization now is critical to combatting climate change and will have a positive impact on planetary health.”

Relate your message to people’s lives:

“Burning dirty fuels causes pollution. Pollution causes asthma. Reducing dirty fuels is good for kids – and everyone.”
I WILL NOT DO ANYTHING EVER AGAIN.
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ecoAmerica Resources

- American Climate Values 2014
- Let’s Talk Communities and Climate
  - report release in February 2017
  - webinars and briefings
- Path to Positive Communities
  - impact and engagement resources
Path to Positive Los Angeles

 Leaders and citizens working to build deep and lasting support for climate action in Los Angeles, and across Southern California.

100+ Path to Positive LA Leadership Circle Members
Thanks!

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